



## A Proactive Approach to Handling Vehicle Recalls

The Raechel and Jacqueline Houck Safe Rental Car Act requires car rental companies to ground vehicles in their fleets within 24 or 48 hours—depending on fleet size—after receiving a recall notice and to remedy the defect prior to renting, selling or leasing the car. (The 24/48-hour rules are not applicable to vehicles rented out at the time the notice is received.)

While the law applies to operators with 35 or more vehicles, Lancer recommends that all companies that rent out vehicles implement procedures for responding to vehicle recalls, regardless of fleet size. Here are some best practices to consider:

- **Ensure all vehicle registrations are up-to-date, including your current mailing address.** Auto manufacturers merge their purchase records with current state vehicle registration information to notify vehicle owners of recalls by U.S. mail.
- **Be proactive in identifying recalled vehicles.** Mailed notices often go out days or even weeks after a recall is made public, and sometimes recall notices don't reach vehicle owners. Expedite the identification and repair of recalled vehicles by:
  - Utilizing the [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration \(NHTSA\) recall database](#), which allows you to search for recalls by vehicle identification number (VIN) or vehicle year, make and model. Also, conduct a VIN lookup each time a vehicle is brought in for preventive maintenance.
  - Subscribing to [receive email alerts](#) of recall announcements from NHTSA.
  - Downloading the [Safercar app for iPhones](#) or [Androids](#) to have recall alerts sent to your phone.
  - Following NHTSA on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) to learn about the latest recalls.
  - Forging relationships with local and regional auto dealerships and automaker representatives. They will often be the first to know about recalls and can help you stay informed.
- **Document your company's vehicle recall policy and clearly communicate it to your staff.** The policy should not only outline the steps for tracking recalls, and grounding and repairing recalled vehicles, but how customers are informed about recalls.
- **Be aggressive.** Once a recall has been identified, act fast. The sooner you contact

the dealer to schedule the repair(s), the sooner your vehicle(s) can be back on the road. Also, don't limit yourself to only the closest dealership. If you have a number of recalled vehicles, sending them to multiple dealerships may expedite the repair process. Importantly, ensure the authorized repair facility reports that the repairs have been made to the auto manufacturer.

- **Maintain records of all recall notices and repairs.** In the event of litigation following an accident, company vehicle maintenance documentation will be scrutinized, so it deserves your attention.

- **Do your research before purchasing any vehicles.** Check for open recalls and select vehicles with the best reliability and safety records. Also, consider buying vehicles from different manufacturers to help minimize the impact of recalls.

Every safety recall puts your renters at risk and may lead your facility to greater liability exposure. By having procedures in place for effectively handling vehicle recalls, you can help keep your renters safe while behind the wheel of your vehicles and mitigate potential risks to your company.

