



EVIDENCE & RESOLUTION

Vehicle Safety-Concern Documentation Workbook

Organize factual observations, vehicle identity, service history, recall research and a safety-complaint preparation packet without diagnosing a defect.

WHAT THIS WORKBOOK HELPS YOU DO

01

Complete your observation and hypothesis timeline

02

Complete your vehicle and history map

03

Complete your official search and complaint preparation

A vehicle owner who believes a mechanical or equipment safety problem may have been involved in a crash.

Use it on screen or on paper. Save a personal copy before entering information. Blank response areas are fillable; printed copies work just as well. Keep completed copies private.

Scope. Educational organization tools, not legal, medical, tax or financial advice. No claim result, coverage decision or payment is promised. Verify policy language, current local rules and all deadlines with the appropriate professional or official source.



START HERE

Start with a clear working file

Work on one claim, account or issue at a time. Keep originals unchanged and label working copies with a short evidence ID. Complete the guidance in order, then use the worksheets to turn questions into an organized next step.

A practical order

- 01 Read the four guidance pages before filling the worksheets. Mark facts you can support and questions that still need an answer.

GUIDANCE / PAGES 03-06

- 02 Use the fictional examples to check your method. Their facts and dollar amounts do not describe your claim or predict an outcome.

EXAMPLES / PAGE 07

- 03 Complete the four working sheets, then use the readiness check and next-step page. Duplicate a worksheet when you need another record.

WORKSHEETS / PAGES 08-11

Protect your information

Store completed copies somewhere private. Use a claim or account suffix when a full identifier is unnecessary. Share only relevant copies through a verified recipient and appropriate channel. A saved PDF can contain personal information even when it is not open on screen.

Before a deadline. Do not wait to finish this workbook when a notice, release, court paper or policy deadline needs attention. Verify the actual requirement and seek qualified help promptly.



GUIDANCE 1

01

Put immediate safety first

If the vehicle or component may be unsafe, follow emergency guidance and qualified professional instructions. Do not test-drive the vehicle, repeat a suspected failure, dismantle a safety system or handle hazardous components to gather better evidence. Record the vehicle's location and the professional responsible for safe custody. Keep claim paperwork separate from the decision whether the vehicle can be driven. If towing, repairs or disposal are being discussed, promptly raise the safety concern and the need for appropriate advice about preserving relevant material.

Describe the observation before the theory

Write what you actually noticed: the sound, warning, movement, display, braking response or other event, along with timing and conditions you remember. Separate those observations from what you think caused them. "The warning light appeared before I stopped" is different from "the controller failed." Record uncertainty and distinguish pre-crash behavior from damage seen afterward. Do not adopt a technical diagnosis from a social-media post or another owner's experience. A clear factual account is useful even when the cause remains unknown.

RELATED WORKING SHEETS

- Observation and hypothesis timeline
- Inspection, custody and outcome record

Sources for this page: [1], [2], [3]. See the linked source guide.



GUIDANCE 2

02

Confirm the exact vehicle or equipment

Use registration, purchase and service records to identify the VIN, year, make, model, relevant equipment and available part information. Do not approach an unsafe vehicle just to read a label. For tires, child restraints or replacement parts, record identifiers already available in documents and photographs and ask qualified professionals about missing information. A recall for a similar model or component may not cover yours. Keep ownership, modifications and replacement history visible, because the vehicle's present configuration may differ from how it was originally sold.

Preserve service and symptom history

Collect maintenance records, previous repair orders, earlier complaints, diagnostic documents and communications with a dealer or manufacturer. Record dates and mileage from the documents rather than recreating an exact number from memory. Keep the full record, including repairs or observations that do not support your initial theory. If a shop plans to replace or discard a component, seek timely professional and legal advice about inspection and preservation before assuming an ordinary repair workflow is enough. This workbook does not issue a legal hold or authorize destructive testing.

RELATED WORKING SHEETS

- Vehicle and history map
- Observation and hypothesis timeline

Sources for this page: [1], [2], [3]. See the linked source guide.



GUIDANCE 3

03

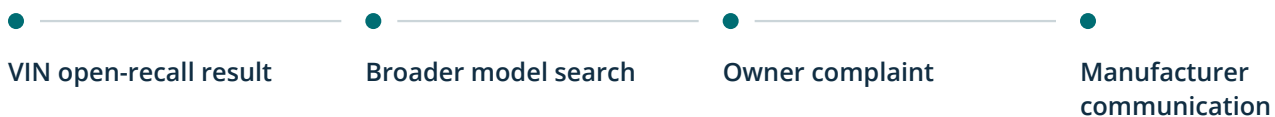
Read recall searches accurately

Use NHTSA's official recall resources and distinguish a VIN-specific open-recall result from a broader model search, investigation, owner complaint or manufacturer communication. Save the search date, identifier, result and limitations. An open recall calls for attention to the manufacturer's current safety guidance; it does not establish accident causation. Conversely, a result showing no unrepaired recall is not a comprehensive assurance that every safety problem has been ruled out. Avoid treating a collection of complaints as verified findings about your individual vehicle.

Prepare a factual safety complaint

Use the official NHTSA complaint route if you choose to report a suspected safety problem. Organize the vehicle identifiers, event description, approximate dates or mileage and relevant repair history so that the submission is accurate. Do not include unnecessary personal information in narrative fields or accuse a named person of wrongdoing without support. NHTSA explains that complaint information contributes to safety review and public data after identifying information is removed. A safety complaint is not a claim for your accident compensation and does not replace insurer notice or legal action.

Record each result's type, scope, and limits without treating it as a causation finding.



Sources for this page: [1], [2], [3]. See the linked source guide.



GUIDANCE 4

04

Coordinate inspections without losing context

If an insurer, shop, manufacturer or expert requests access, document who is asking, the intended inspection, proposed work, custody arrangements and any questions about preserving the vehicle or parts. Do not consent to tests or disposal you do not understand based solely on this workbook. A qualified attorney or expert may need to coordinate where evidence or a serious injury claim is involved. Keep ordinary repair authorization separate from legal releases and broader permissions. Record what actually happened during any authorized work using the resulting professional records.

Track outcomes without overstating them

Keep complaint reference numbers, recall notices, dealer responses, professional findings and repair records together. Distinguish a report received, an investigation opened, a recall announced, a repair completed and a legal finding about causation. Each is a different outcome. Follow verified safety instructions and retain the documents needed for other claim processes. If the cause remains unresolved, say so. The workbook's useful result is a traceable safety-concern file and clear questions for experts, not a declaration that a manufacturer is liable.

RELATED WORKING SHEETS

- Inspection, custody and outcome record
- Vehicle and history map

Sources for this page: [1], [2], [3]. See the linked source guide.



FICTIONAL EXAMPLES

Work through the examples

These invented cases demonstrate the method. They are not case results, estimates of what you will receive or statements of universal rights.

01 The similar-model recall

An online post mentions a recall on a vehicle with a similar name.

Next step: Verify the exact vehicle and the official scope before drawing conclusions.

Avoid. Claiming the recall caused the accident based on a model-name resemblance.

02 A receipt is not a finding

NHTSA acknowledges a complaint.

Next step: Save the reference and describe the status as submitted.

Avoid. Saying the agency confirmed a defect or opened an investigation without evidence.



WORKSHEET 1

01

Observation and hypothesis timeline

State what you perceived separately from an unverified cause.

Date/time basis

Conditions

Direct observation

Before/after impact

Warning or symptom

Who observed

Supporting record

Hypothesis unverified

Related guidance: [Put immediate safety first](#)



WORKSHEET 2

02

Vehicle and history map

Use safely available records; do not dismantle or approach hazardous equipment.

VIN/identifier storage reference

Year/make/model

Equipment/part

Modification/replacement

Mileage source

Service date

Reported concern

Repair record

Related guidance: [Confirm the exact vehicle or equipment](#)



WORKSHEET 3

03

Official search and complaint preparation

Record the kind of result and its limits.

Official URL

Search date

Identifier used

Result type

Recall/investigation ID

Scope

What remains unproved

Complaint draft/reference

[Related guidance: Read recall searches accurately](#)



WORKSHEET 4

04

Inspection, custody and outcome record

Get qualified advice before testing, altering or discarding potential evidence.

Custodian/location

Professional contact

Requested inspection/work

Permission question

Preservation advice

Work documented

Official response

Outcome/status

Unresolved causation

Related guidance: [Coordinate inspections without losing context](#)



READINESS REVIEW

Check the file before using it

REVIEW EACH ITEM BEFORE MOVING ON

- ☐ Each working figure or statement is linked to an identifiable document.
- ☐ Missing information is marked as unverified rather than estimated as fact.
- ☐ The exact question and the person or organization able to answer it are identified.
- ☐ The current document version and any conflicting version are preserved.
- ☐ Independent deadlines and the source of each deadline have been checked.
- ☐ The final written response has been compared with the original question.

What still needs attention

Open fact or decision, who can resolve it, and the source needed

Completion standard. The working file is complete when the important facts are supported, the next action is assigned and any unresolved issues remain clearly visible. A completed checklist does not establish coverage, entitlement or legal compliance.



ACTION PLAN

Write down the next step

Choose the smallest useful next step. Make the request specific enough that the recipient can locate the record and explain or address the exact issue. Keep proof of what you sent and what came back.

The exact issue or request

Evidence IDs and document versions that support the request

Verified recipient and channel

Date sent and follow-up date

What response will resolve the issue, and what still needs professional review

Separate decisions. A courtesy follow-up date is not a legal deadline. A document request does not automatically pause another requirement. Do not sign, settle, move property or disclose sensitive records merely because a box on this page is complete.



REFERENCE GUIDE

Sources and scope

The linked official sources support the educational background. The forms and examples are original organization tools. Sources were checked on October 1, 2026; policies, procedures and law may change. Recheck the current source before relying on a rule.

[1] NHTSA recall and safety-problem resources

NHTSA distinguishes VIN searches, broader searches, complaints, investigations and recalls, and states search limitations. Scope: No inference that a recall proves individual causation or that no open recall means no possible defect.

<https://www.nhtsa.gov/recalls>

[2] NHTSA resources related to investigations and recalls

Official resources explain safety complaints and investigation/recall information. Scope: Safety-regulator process, not a personal damages-recovery service.

<https://www.nhtsa.gov/resources-investigations-recalls>

[3] NHTSA consumer alert on reporting safety issues

Owners can report suspected safety issues even where there is no current recall. Scope: A complaint is an allegation for review, not a confirmed defect finding.

<https://www.nhtsa.gov/press-releases/consumer-alert-nhtsa-encourages-you-report-your-vehicles-safety-issues>

Keep the scope clear

No test-driving or reenactment

No unsupported defect or causation diagnosis

No liability guarantee