



Counterfeit airbags seized by federal agents.

NEWS:

Bill Guards Against Threat Posed by Fake Airbags

A [bill](#) intended to protect motorists from unsafe airbags is on its way to the Senate after clearing the House on a unanimous vote earlier this week.

"This bill calls for anyone replacing or repairing an airbag to use a manufacturer-grade device," said the measure's prime sponsor, [State Rep. Ruth Briggs King, R-Georgetown-Long Neck](#). "Counterfeit airbags may not work at all, or may work defectively, in some cases spraying debris that can act like shrapnel."

Rep. Briggs King also noted that an accident in which a counterfeit airbag is involved could void certain warranty and insurance coverage. "So the victim could be left with both a physical injury and financial harm," she said.



State Rep.
Ruth Briggs King

The use of counterfeit airbags is a growing problem. Usually, the devices are manufactured outside the country and sold at a deep discount when compared to genuine devices. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) lists dozens of makes and models of vehicles for which it is aware counterfeit airbags have been marketed.

In November of last year, U.S. Customs and Border Protection officials in Los Angeles [seized a shipment](#) of counterfeit Honda airbags coming from China that had been mislabeled as "plastic boards" to escape detection.

"Airbags are essential car safety features and we know counterfeit devices are a major invisible threat already associated with fatalities in the United States," NHTSA Acting Administrator James Owens said.

Rep. Briggs King's bill would amend existing law on prohibited trade practices, clarifying the code regarding the fraudulent use of counterfeit airbags.

The attorney general could levy steep fines against a business found guilty of violating the law and order it to cease operations.

Although Rep. Briggs King said automotive mechanics and technicians trained for airbag replacement should be able to easily spot ersatz devices, the bill contains a provision to protect business owners who unknowingly use a counterfeit product.

For consumer protection tips from the National Insurance Crime Bureau, [click here](#).