

# Consumer News & Views

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**Consumer Confidence Rebounds Slightly During May.** The Conference Board *Consumer Confidence Index*®, which had declined in April, increased moderately in May. The Index now stands at 95.4 (1985=100), up from 94.3 in April.

"Consumer confidence improved modestly in May, after declining sharply in April," said Lynn Franco, Director of Economic Indicators at The Conference Board. "



Thomas Hinton, president of the American Consumer Council, a non-profit consumer education organization with over 163,000 members, echoed Franco's remarks. "We continue to have confidence in the economic progress of the country," Hinton noted, "and we think consumers will continue to spend wisely while trying to save money as best they can."

Hinton added, "We are still looking for stronger job growth especially for college graduates in a wide range of professional fields – from teaching to medical care, and the passage of a major infrastructure bill from Congress to repairs roads, bridges and railways."

**Takata Airbag Recall Expands to Over 38 Million Vehicles.** The Takata airbag recall has now surpassed 33.8 million vehicles made by 11 different automakers according to *Consumer Reports*. The affected vehicles have been recalled to replace frontal airbags on the driver's side or passenger's side, or both. The airbags, made by major parts supplier Takata, were installed in cars from model year 2002 through 2008. Some of those airbags could deploy explosively, injuring or even killing car occupants.

The different automakers' notices to their customers have varied, depending on how many Takata airbags they installed and how long they believe it will take them to acquire replacements if they don't have enough on hand. To provide guidance to car owners, *Consumer Reports* spoke with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), Takata, and most carmakers.

Nissan's explanation of the issue was one of the clearest: "The propellant could potentially deteriorate over time due to environmental factors [due to many years in high humidity conditions], which could lead to over-aggressive combustion in the event of an airbag deployment. This could create excessive internal pressure within the inflator and could cause the inflator housing to rupture."

If the airbag housing ruptures in a crash, metal shards from the airbag can be sprayed throughout the passenger cabin—a potentially disastrous outcome from a supposedly life-saving device.

The U.S. Department of Transportation released a statement saying that Takata acknowledges airbag inflators it produced for certain vehicles were faulty. It expanded certain regional recalls to national ones, and included inflators fitted in certain Daimler Trucks in the recalled vehicles. In all, the recall was expanded to a staggering 33.8 million vehicles. That number includes the roughly 17 million vehicles previously recalled by affected automakers.



A week after federal regulators and airbag maker Takata announced the largest safety recall in U.S. history, a congressional subcommittee said it would hold a hearing next week to get an update on the widening campaign to address potentially deadly airbag inflators.

The Commerce, Manufacturing and Trade Subcommittee — part of the U.S. House Energy and Commerce Committee — will hold the hearing in Washington next week as congressional investigators try to get to the bottom of what the full committee chairman, U.S. Rep. Fred Upton, R-St. Joseph, called "a year of Takata ruptures and recalls."

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**ACC Annual Business Meeting Scheduled for Friday, June 12, in San Diego.** The American Consumer Council (ACC) has announced its 2015 annual business meeting will be held at the Rancho Bernardo Inn located in San Diego on Friday, June 12, at 10:00 am. Members are welcome to attend. For details, please contact ACC at 1-760-787-0414.

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**ACC's Friend of the Consumer Award Recognizes Outstanding Businesses in 2015.**

Is your business consumer-friendly? Does your business deserve greater recognition for its service to consumers? If so, you should apply for the American Consumer Council's Friend of the Consumer Award. Now is the time to apply!

Throughout the year, ACC presents its "Friend of the Consumer" Awards. This prestigious award recognizes manufacturers, retailers, and other businesses that produce or sell products in the United States that meet or exceed federally-mandated standards and are touted by consumers as "consumer friendly."

Each year, ACC awards numerous "Friend of the Consumer" Awards to deserving companies and organizations because they have "demonstrated a commitment to American consumers by providing a specific product or service that fosters consumer confidence and market acceptance."



To apply for the "Friend of the Consumer" award, complete the online application and return it to ACC with the application fee. Applicants will be notified within 5 days of receipt of their application. Thereafter, a panel of independent judges will review your application and make a formal recommendation within 20 days of receipt of your award application.

For more information, visit: <http://www.americanconsumercouncil.org/awards.asp>

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### Green C<sup>SM</sup> Certification Accepting Applications for 2015 Summer Cycle:

If your company or organization would like to increase its credibility with consumers, you should consider applying for the **Green C<sup>SM</sup> Certification**. Applications for the 2015 Summer cycle are now being accepted through August 31, 2015.

It's a proven fact that consumers want to do business with companies that are eco-friendly and practice Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). The process is straight-forward and all applicants are recognized by ACC and the Green USA Institute.

All applicants complete the criteria and submit their responses to ACC's Green Consumer Council for review, assessment and feedback. Program details and the **Green C<sup>SM</sup> Certification** criteria can be viewed at ACC's website located at: <http://americanconsumercouncil.org/greenc.asp>

