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IN BRIEF

Bush meets with Saudi leader to address oil prices

CRAWFORD, Texas — President Bush is seeking relief from record-high gas prices and support for

Middle East peace as he opens his Texas ranch to Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, the world's largest oil producer.

Bush said he'll make clear Monday that it's not in Saudi Arabia's interests to keep oil prices high. "If they pinch the world economy too much, it'll affect their ability to sell crude oil in the long run," he said in a television interview last week.

The president also said he's looking for "a straight answer" on how close the Saudis are to reaching production capacity. "I don't think they're pumping flat out," Bush said.

Bush's goal of spreading democracy across the Arab world also faces

a difficult test with Saudi Arabia, a longtime ally ruled by absolute monarchy. Traditionally Bush holds news conferences with visiting foreign leaders, but there will be none during this visit because Abdullah rarely talks with reporters.

Monday's meeting marks another step in greater U.S. involvement in the Mideast. Two weeks ago Bush met at the ranch with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and said Israel should abandon plans for new construction of Jewish settlements in the Palestinian territories. The Saudis believe the administration's strong support for Israel harms prospects for Middle East peace.

— The Associated Press

Safety concerns steer GM to recall 2 million vehicles

BY KEN THOMAS
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON, D.C. — General Motors Corp. is recalling more than 2 million vehicles, including nearly 1.5 million sport utility vans and pickup trucks that have problems with their seat belts.

The company said Monday a few minor injuries were associated with the six separate recalls and owners would be notified of the problems by mail.

Among the vehicles affected were 1.48 million SUVs and pickups from the 2003-2005 model years, including the Chevrolet Silverado Crew Cab, Suburban, Tahoe, Avalanche; Cadillac Escalade, Escalade ESV, Escalade EXT; GMC Sierra Crew Cab, Yukon XL, Yukon; and the Hummer H2s.

The recalls represented the latest challenge for the world's largest automaker, which last week reported \$1.1 billion in losses in the first quarter, its largest quarterly loss in more than a decade.

GM has cited the financial burdens of providing health coverage for its workers and retirees amid lackluster car sales. Sales of the automaker's popular SUVs and large trucks have been

off, in part because of high gas prices.

As for the recalls, spokesman Alan Adler said the center safety belt in the second row of the SUVs and pickups, typically used for child seats, was riding high on the occupant's stomach. Although no injuries have been connected to the problem, Adler said, there could be a reduced protection in that portion of the body in the event of a crash.

Bob Lange, GM's executive director of structure and safety integration, said fixing the seat belts in the SUVs and trucks was "an important precautionary measure."

"Our commitment to promoting safety and reminding everybody to buckle up properly on every trip led us to this decision," Lange said.

The company announced recalls for the following vehicles:

- More than 330,000 1500 Series Chevrolet Suburbans and Yukon XLs from 2000-2001 for potential overheating of fuel pump wires that could lead to engine stalling. There were no known crashes or injuries related to the problem.

- More than 142,000 1500 Series Chevrolet Silverado and GMC Sierra pickups from 1999-2002 and

2500/3500 Series pickups from the 2001-2005 model years with manual transmissions for parking brake friction. Adler said 26 crashes and one minor injury were connected to the problem.

- More than 69,000 Buick Lacrosse and Buick Allure 2005 models from Canada for a bent clip that holds part of the brake. If the clip comes off, it would lead to brake loss and a crash, Adler said. There has been one minor crash from the issue.

- More than 39,000 Buick Rendezvous and Pontiac Azteks from 2004 for intermittent stalling or failure to start because of a faulty ignition relay. GM said it was aware of one minor crash but no injuries.

- More than 22,000 Saturn L Series Wagons from 2002-2004 because they were built with a center and passenger side rear seat belt anchors that do not comply with U.S. and Canadian safety standards.

The company said the problems will be corrected at no charge.

GM said in 2005, the company has made 22 recalls accounting for 2.9 million vehicles. During the same period in 2004, the company had 18 recalls for a total of 8.5 million vehicles.

General Motors to recall 2.1 million vehicles

General Motors announced a voluntary recall of nearly 1.5 million sport utility vehicles and pickup trucks and more than 605,000 other vehicles for various safety reasons.

Vehicles to be recalled

MODEL	YEAR	NO. RECALLED	REASON
Chevrolet Silverado Crew Cab, Suburban, Tahoe, Avalanche; Cadillac Escalade, Escalade ESV, Escalade EXT; GMC Sierra Crew Cab, Yukon XL, Yukon; Hummer H2	2003-05	1.49 million	Repair to the lap portion of the second-row center occupant seat belt
Chevrolet Suburban and Yukon XL	2000-01	332,202	Overheating of fuel pump wires
Chevrolet Silverado 1500 series; GMC Sierra 2500/3500 series (both with manual transmissions)	1999-2002 2001-2004	142,585	Parking brake friction
Buick Lacrosse and Buick Allure (Canada only)	2005	69,037	Bent clip that holds part of the brake
Buick Rendezvous and Pontiac Azteks	2004	39,078	Faulty ignition relay could cause stalling or failure to start
Saturn L Series Wagons	2002-04	22,115	Center and passenger side rear seat belt does not comply to U.S. and Canadian safety standards

SOURCE: General Motors

AP



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