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CITY OF CHICAGO FILES SUIT AGAINST AUTOMAKERS KIA AND HYUNDAI

A critical defect in the companies' vehicles led to a car theft crisis.

CHICAGO – Mayor Brandon Johnson announced today that the City has filed a civil lawsuit against Kia America, Inc., Kia Corporation, Hyundai Motor America, and Hyundai Motor Company for their failure to include industry-standard engine immobilizers in multiple models of their vehicles, resulting in a steep rise in vehicle thefts, reckless driving, property damage, and a wide array of related violent crimes in Chicago.

The complaint, which was filed in the Circuit Court of Cook County, alleges that Kia and Hyundai failed to equip their U.S. cars, sold between 2011 and 2022, with vital anti-theft technology, which almost all other car manufacturers made a standard feature over a decade ago and which Kia and Hyundai include in their vehicles sold outside of the country. The Complaint alleges that Kia and Hyundai deceptively assured consumers that these vehicles possessed “advanced” safety features, despite knowing about this critical defect and its consequences.

“The impact of car theft on Chicago residents can be deeply destabilizing, particularly for low- to middle-income workers who have fewer options for getting to work and taking care of their families,” **said Mayor Brandon Johnson**. “The failure of Kia and Hyundai to install basic auto-theft prevention technology in these models is sheer negligence, and as a result, a citywide and nationwide crime spree around automobile theft has been unfolding right before our eyes.”

Since videos posted on social media exposed this defect, thefts of Kia and Hyundai vehicles in Chicago surged from about 500 in the first half of 2022 to more than 8,350 during the second half of the year. Theft of Kia and Hyundai vehicles continue to comprise more than half of all vehicles stolen in Chicago in 2023.

Because these vehicles are entry-level models, Kia's and Hyundai's failure to include engine immobilizers disproportionately impacts low-income Chicago residents. Moreover, offenders have used stolen Kia and Hyundai vehicles to commit other crimes, including reckless driving, armed robbery, and murder.



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Kia and Hyundai have failed to remedy their misconduct, refusing to provide sufficient steering wheel locks requested by the City and even taking advantage of the crisis by charging consumers for security kits.

"Chicago is bearing the cost of Defendants' unlawful conduct, as it pays for property damage, diverts law enforcement resources, and strives to keep the public safe from harm Defendants could have prevented," **said Corporation Counsel Mary Richardson-Lowry.**

"This is about saving lives and preventing the violent crimes that these stolen vehicles are used in," **said Interim Superintendent Fred Waller.** "As law enforcement, we are doing everything we can to prevent these thefts, but these vehicle companies must also be held accountable."

The City's Complaint alleges that Defendants' actions violated the City's consumer protection laws, were negligent, and created a public nuisance. The City aims to reclaim expenses incurred by the City in responding to the wave of thefts, provide restitution to Chicago owners of affected vehicles, and compel the companies to fix security flaws in affected vehicles.

The City is represented in this lawsuit by lawyers from the Affirmative Litigation Division in its Department of Law. If any Chicagoan wishes to inform the City about their experience with Kia and Hyundai related to their failure to install immobilizers and resulting thefts, they can do so by emailing consumerprotection@cityofchicago.org.

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