

# RENAULT'S RECALL FIASCO

## Renault recalls another 15,000 Lagunas

As a result of our ongoing investigation (see 'Inside Story', April and June), Renault has offered to inspect the cars of 35 *Which?* readers who complained of engine cut-out. We welcome this move but don't think it goes far enough, because Renault still won't admit that other owners could be at risk from this.

In a recent letter to *Which?* Renault stressed that the problem was restricted to the Laguna 1.6. But, the next day the Vehicle Inspectorate (VI) sent us details of another recall – already registered by Renault – recalling 15,462 Lagunas, including some diesels whose 'engine may stall at idle or after hard acceleration'. And, in August 2001, 761 Renault Méganes were recalled as their 'engines may cut-out'. So, clearly, the engine cut-out problems are more widespread than Renault has admitted to us.

Renault says that the technical reasons for cut-out are not identical in each model, but the consequences are the same – drivers are put in danger by their cars suddenly cutting out.

Although Renault has acknowledged a problem with the Laguna 1.6, it continues to deny to *Which?* that other models could be affected, despite complaints from 50 readers who've experienced repeated engine cut-outs in their Renaults. Only seven of the complaints are about Laguna 1.6s. The remaining complaints concern other types of Laguna, Clios, Méganes and Scénics. At least



**Renault problems accelerate**

Consumers' Association... Throughout the pages of our magazine, *Which?* has... and have consistently highlighted good and bad practice in this area. We have... and disappointed with Renault UK's attitude to the problems we have highlighted. For a man... that seems to take itself on the safety of its models, we had hoped for a more positive... However, until recently, Renault UK has been almost reluctant to deal with the issues... Since February we have cleared an open and constructive dialogue with the car... order to address our concerns. Unfortunately there seems to be a great reluctance to... to acknowledge that a problem exists, instead, even in the letter of the 21<sup>st</sup> July, Green... states that the problem is restricted to 1.6 litre models. However, the UK Vehicle Inspector... advised us that the company is also in the process of recalling diesel variants with the... problem we have described.

### Double trouble with Renault

Peter Gledhill, from Northamptonshire, had problems with not one, but two new Laguna 1.9 diesel turbos. The first car had a problem with surging acceleration, so after three months of frustration Renault exchanged it for a new model. He realised the replacement had a serious cut-out problem within a few miles of leaving the garage. He turned round and took it straight back to the dealer, but no fault could be found with it. Peter then went through six months of inconvenience as the car lost power up to 20 times a day. He returned the car to the dealer six times but it couldn't find or fix the problem. Peter narrowly avoided a head on collision with a lorry, and his wife refused to drive the car at all.

Finally, Peter had had enough. Renault had refused to refund or replace the second car so his only option was to sell it back to them just six months after buying it – at a loss of £3,500. His car may have been affected by Renault's diesel recall.



30 of the cars are less than three years old.

And to top it off, owners suffering from these problems aren't being treated consistently by dealers. Some Renault dealers have carried out repairs to readers' cars – reprogramming or replacing the engine management unit to fix a cut-out problem. Others seem unable to locate a fault or unwilling to investigate the problem.

### FLAWS IN RECALL SYSTEM

Renault says that it issued a full recall in March of all 4,836

Laguna 1.6s affected. But, despite reassurances from Renault UK that all its dealers have been notified of the recall, we're worried that some are still unaware of the fault and how to fix it. When we rang eight Renault dealers in the UK, none gave us the correct details of the recall. Most denied there were any major problems but some advised us to give them a registration number for checking.

*Which?* believes that there are serious flaws in the UK's car recall system, too.

Manufacturers should

report recalls to the VI and send letters to owners asking them to bring vehicles in for checks. Incredibly there's no requirement for manufacturers to publicise recalls in the press or on their own websites.

Manufacturers' recalls are not closely monitored and some choose to publicise recalls more than others.

### WHAT DO WE WANT?

We've asked Renault to admit that there may be a problem of engine cut-out with some cars – regardless of model.

We believe it needs to investigate the problem more widely and make sure dealers are aware of any fix. Anyone experiencing engine cut-out, in any recent Renault model, should be treated fairly and have the problem investigated and resolved quickly.

We've written to Renault UK and France to raise these points and are discussing this matter with them.

Please write to us at Dept JH with details of your car if you've experienced engine cut-out on a new Renault, and lodge a complaint with the VI on 0117 954 3300.