

Written evidence submitted by Michael Figge (VVF001)

Account of Zafira - SG 06 UTO car fire

I was at work on the evening of Tuesday 20th Oct 2015, When I finally left, I went to my cat to find that the battery was flat (which was strange, in that it was a relatively new battery – 3 mths old). A colleague was kind enough to give me a jump start so I could get home to put the battery on charge. On the way, I called my wife to let her know I was going to be late. At the same time I asked her to get our son ready as I would get home, change out of uniform, go for a 20 min drive to give the battery a charge and then go to Tesco to get the shopping as we had planned.

When I arrived home, I pulled up, got out of the car, leaving it running whilst I nipped in to get changed. As I went into the house, I told my youngest son to get his things and get into the car – it was nice and warm for him. I had just gone upstairs when he came back into the house shouting that there was smoke coming from our car. I just thought that he meant the exhaust was a little smoky as we had had an issue with the engine turbo and Catalytic converter which had recently both been replaced at a cost of £1500. Almost immediately my eldest son (whose room overlooks the path where my car was parked shouted 'Dad, your car is on fire'. It was at this stage I realised there was a major issue, and rushed down stairs to see the area in front of the front passenger seat alight.



I screamed at the family to get inside and move away from the windows facing the car. My wife who was visibly disturbed managed to get hold of my youngest son who at this time was hysterical (he has been diagnosed with Complex ADHD & ASD amongst other things) and tried to calm him down from his now full blown melt-down.



Once everyone was safe and there was no immediate risk to life, I made sure that someone had called 999, as it happened my eldest was on the line to the operator and handed me the phone, we confirmed the situation and I was told the fire service were on their way and would be there soon. The fire station in Thetford is manned by a retained crew who as it happened were on a training night! Unfortunately they had to repack the tender before they could attend. They arrived after about 18 min but the fire had got hold and done its damage. After the crew had put the fire out, the extent of the damage could be seen in the adjacent image.



Luckily for all involved the car was a diesel variant and as such was not subject to the additional issues associated with a petrol version in that there was no real risk of the tank going up as is the case with the majority of other Zafira fires. The amount of damage sustained by my car is solely down to the combustible materials in the engine compartment initially and then those of the passenger compartment once the firewall had been breached.

The aftermath of the fire is still being felt by me and my family after having;

- a) Lost the car,
- b) Having had to buy a replacement
- c) Having received a meagre reimbursement of £2300 from the Insurance company minus the excess of £150 and being subject to increased premiums (although they have assured me there is no blame attributable to me)

- d) Lost the contents of the car, to either fire, heat or smoke damage, Uninsured losses limit of £100 (included in the total pay-out of £2150) of with the approximate total value of £1800
- e) Been told that GM Vauxhall had contacted Admiral Insurance saying they accept liability for my car along with 4 others that Admiral were dealing with.
- f) My son now has a fear of any Zafira, and was frightened of getting into cars after what happened.

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