

LAWSUIT BEING FILED AGAINST HYUNDAI



A lawsuit is being filed against Hyundai Motor America for misleading consumers about inflated fuel economy claims for its Elantra. The lawsuit is being filed by a consumer watchdog group and a car buyer. The lawsuit is the second filed lately against an automaker that focuses on the use of mileage numbers by automakers when they advertise the vehicles they produce. The lawsuit also hints at consumer frustration regarding mileage claims because automakers have changed their marketing schemes to focus on fuel economy instead of speed and horsepower. "This is becoming a customer satisfaction issue," said Aaron Bragman, an analyst with IHS Automotive. "If you sell them on an attribute they don't get, it can come back and bite you." The lawsuit claims that Hyundai markets its "40 Mile Per Gallon Elantra" without a government-mandated disclosure that the estimate is solely for highway driving and other measures of the vehicle are lower. The lawsuit was filed in Sacramento on behalf of Louis Bird. Bird purchased an Elantra in 2011 and logged mileage. He said that the majority of his driving took place on open highways and that he barely gets 29 miles per gallon. "We are hoping that other car makers will take notice and realize that if you do it wrong, you will have to pay the price," said Jamie Court. Court is the executive director of Consumer Watchdog. Consumer Watchdog filed the lawsuit jointly. The lawsuit is attempting to garner class action status while also stopping Hyundai from using gas mileage numbers when it advertises the Elantra without government-mandated disclosures. The lawsuit is asking for unspecified damages for residents of California who purchased the vehicle or leased the vehicle in 2011 and 2012. Hyundai has defended its estimate, saying that the estimate was certified by the Environmental Protection Agency. The EPA publishes fuel economy information for all cars sold in the United States. "Hyundai Motor America believes this case has no merit, as our advertising is accurate and in full compliance with applicable laws and regulations," Hyundai said. Hyundai has said that it bases its claims on tests run by the EPA, which rate the Elantra at 40 mpg on the highway and 29 mpg in the city with a combined efficiency of 33 mpg. When independent testing was performed by Consumer Reports magazine, the Elantra averaged only 20 mpg in the city, 39 mpg on the highway and 29 mpg for combined driving. The EPA has been criticized when it comes to its tests and the agency has even said that its ratings should be used to compare vehicles, not to predict fuel economy for vehicles.

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