

Govt mulls penalising companies for EV fire as voluntary recall begins

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Months after a spate of fires in two-wheelers put a dent in India's EV overdrive, the central government will soon take a call on whether or not to take penal action against manufacturers of faulty electric vehicles.

In April, Union Minister for Road Transport, Nitin Gadkari, warned EV makers of strict action if they are found negligent. "If any company is found negligent in their processes, a heavy penalty will be imposed and a recall of all defective vehicles will also be ordered," he had tweeted.

"We haven't yet decided what penal action will be taken against the companies at fault. Once we receive all responses from the companies on show-cause notice, we'll deliberate and decide what action needs to be taken. Meanwhile, they've been advised to course correct," a senior official in the know of the matter told Business Standard.

The show-cause notices to companies such as Ola, Okinawa, PureEV have been sent based on the findings of a report, submitted to the ministry last month, by the Centre for Fire, Explosive and Environment Safety, a laboratory of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways is awaiting responses from EV makers under investigation on show-cause notices sent to them. In the notices, the government has sought detailed explanations of why penal action should not be taken against them for the fires, which caused casualties in many cases.

Meanwhile, Ola, Okinawa and Pure have voluntarily recalled nearly 7,000 e-two wheelers of the models that had caught fire. Okinawa in April announced its recall of 3,215 units of its Praise Pro electric scooter "to fix any issue related to batteries". According to the company, the batteries will be "checked for loose connectors or any damage" and be repaired free of cost at Okinawa dealerships.

Following Okinawa, Ola also said that it will recall 1,441 vehicles which will "go through thorough diagnostics across all battery systems, thermal systems as well as safety systems. Simultaneously, Pure EV which has also seen incidents of fire involving its electric scooters, has recalled 2,000 units of its ETrance+ and EPluto 7G models.

Market leader Hero Electric is testing a device that would send three levels of alarm for the scooter user if the battery temperature increases beyond the safety limit. The preventive device has been developed by Maker Max, a Canadian start-up, and can be easily attached to the battery box.