



U.S. Department of Transportation
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

DOT Auto Safety Hotline
Vehicle Owner's Questionnaire
To Report Vehicle Safety Defects
1-888-DASH-2-DOT
(1-888-327-4236)
INTERNET: www.nhtsa.dot.gov/hotline

FOR AGENCY USE ONLY 1374

Date Received
28-JAN-2003

Repository
Reference No.
10004821

OFFICE INVESTIGATION

OWNER INFORMATION (Type or Print)

Name: [REDACTED]
Address: [REDACTED]
City: CORTLANDT MANOR State: NY Zip Code: [REDACTED]

Daytime Telephone Number: [REDACTED] E-mail Address:
Evening Telephone Number:

Do you authorize NHTSA to provide a copy of this report to the manufacturer of your vehicle? YES NO
In the absence of [REDACTED] NOT provide your name or address to the vehicle manufacturer.
Signature of Owner: [REDACTED] Date: 2/18/03

VEHICLE INFORMATION

17 digit Vehicle Identification Number Located at bottom of windshield on driver's side: WVWP063B52P079694
Make: VOLKSWAGEN Model: PASSAT Model Year: 2002
Date Purchased: 9-12-02 Dealer's Name and Telephone Number: [REDACTED]
Original Owner: [REDACTED] Dealer's City: West Nyack State: NY Zip Code: [REDACTED]
Transmission Type: standard Andlock Brakes Powertrain: [REDACTED] Vehicle Component Code: engine coils
 Cruise Control ~~engine suspension frame springs coil springs~~
Multiple Failure:

FAILED COMPONENT(S)/PART(S) INFORMATION

Incident Date(s): 11/3/03 + 12/5/03 Failure Mileage: 30K Failure Speed: [REDACTED]

ADDITIONAL ITEMS TO BE COMPLETED WHEN REPORTING A TIRE FAILURE

Tire Make: [REDACTED] Tire Model (Name or Number): [REDACTED] Tire Size (Example P215/65R15): [REDACTED]
DOT No. (Example: DOTM19ABC036) Original Equipment Prior Repair Failure Location: [REDACTED]
Tire Component Code: [REDACTED] Tire Failure Type: [REDACTED]

ADDITIONAL ITEMS TO BE COMPLETED WHEN REPORTING A CHILD SEAT FAILURE

Make: [REDACTED] Date Manufactured: [REDACTED] Model No./Name: [REDACTED]
Seat Type: [REDACTED] Installation System: [REDACTED]
Child Seat Component Code: [REDACTED] Failed Part: [REDACTED]

APPLICABLE INCIDENT INFORMATION

(Please describe in detail the incident(s), failure(s), crash(es), and injury(ies).)

Crash Yes No Fire Yes No
Number of Persons Injured: [REDACTED] Number of Deaths: [REDACTED] Reported to Police: N

Narrative Description of Incident(s), Crash(es), and Injury(ies).
Please describe (1) events leading up to the failure, (2) failure and its consequences, and (3) what was done to correct the failure; i.e. parts repaired or replaced (and if old part is available).

THE ENGINE COIL FAILED CAUSING THE VEHICLE TO SHAKE VIOLENTLY. PLEASE PROVIDE ANY ADDITIONAL INFORMATION. TS

Please see attached.

Include, if available: Police/Fire Department Report, Photos, and Repair Invoice. ATTACH ADDITIONAL SHEETS IF NECESSARY

The Privacy Act of 1974 (Public Law 93-579) This information is requested pursuant to authority vested in the National Highway Traffic Safety Act and subsequent amendments. You are under no obligation to respond to this questionnaire. Your response may be used to assist the NHTSA in determining whether a Manufacturer should take appropriate action to correct a safety defect. If the NHTSA proceeds with administrative enforcement or litigation against a manufacturer, your response, or a statistical summary thereof, may be used in support of the agency's action.

The New York TimesPRINTER-FRIENDLY FORMAT
SPONSORED BY

STARBUCKS.COM

February 2, 2003

A Black Eye for VW and Audi

By CHERYL JENSEN

WIDESPREAD failures of a crucial engine component have left owners of 2001 and 2002 Volkswagens and Audis stranded and stewing while the companies scramble for replacement parts. The problem, faulty ignition coils, potentially affects more than half a million cars in the United States.

For VW, which hopes to turn itself into an upscale brand, the timing couldn't be worse. The company is bringing out a new \$40,000 sport utility, the Touareg, and this fall it will sell a large luxury sedan, the Phaeton, for \$60,000 to \$75,000. But even as the company lays out a red carpet for demanding luxury-car buyers, it is trying to mollify its current customers and keep their cars running.

Audi, a subsidiary of VW, already competes in the luxury market.

The failures have left owners at roadsides waiting to have cars towed to dealerships. Because replacement parts have been in short supply, some cars have sat for days or weeks. Furthermore, because each car has four or more potentially faulty coils, the experience can be repeated over and over.

VW and Audi have generally declined to replace coils that have not yet failed, angering owners. But late last week, the company said it would have enough parts in March to replace all potentially defective coils.

Ignition coils produce the high-voltage current that fires the sparkplugs. Some automakers use a single coil, but VW has one for each sparkplug — four coils, for instance, on a four-cylinder engine. If a coil fails, the sparkplug will not fire and the engine will lose power.

The company began hearing about problems last fall, said Tony Fouladpour, a Volkswagen spokesman in Auburn Hills, Mich. But it wasn't until Friday that VW and Audi began sending letters to owners of 2001 and 2002 models explaining the problem and what the companies intended to do about it.

VW says more than 500,000 vehicles in the United States may be affected, but the problem is global; even The China Daily has reported on coil failures. Web forums for VW and Audi owners in the United States and Britain have been deluged with complaints. One site — "<http://forums.vwvortex.com/zerthread?id=575535>" — recently had 29 pages of postings on the subject.

VW is aware that owners are saying the company doesn't care about their problems. "That is absolutely not the case," Mr. Fouladpour said. "Have we been playing catch-up? Absolutely. Have we been just trying to get the parts and get them to the dealers? Absolutely. But at this point, we want to prove we can take care of the customer."

The experience of Pat and Carol Navin of Evanston, Ill., seems typical. While Mrs. Navin was driving

<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/02/02/automobiles/02COIL.html?pagewanted=print&position=...> 2/4/03

their 2002 Passat wagon — with just 3,100 miles on the odometer — the "check engine" light came on, and the car rumbled, shook and lost power. Mrs. Navin pulled off the road and had the Passat towed to their dealership. Two of the four coils on the 1.8T four-cylinder engine had failed.

Mr. Navin said that his dealer treated them well and quickly fixed the problem, but that it was inexcusable that VW had only now begun to communicate with owners. "I think I would not have been nearly as angry if I'd gotten a letter," he said. "Instead, they've really chosen to bury their heads in the sand and let everybody discover it for themselves."

VW says the ignition-coil failure rate has been "higher than normal" on 2001 and 2002 models of the New Beetle, Golf, GTI, Jetta and Passat with the turbocharged 1.8T engine, as well as on Audi A4's and TT's with the same engine.

Mr. Fouladpour said that there had been some cases of ignition-coil failures on other engines, but that the rate was not as high as with the 1.8T. Those engines are the 3-liter V-6 in some A4's and A6's; the 2.8-liter VR6, a narrow-angle V-6 in the Eurovan, GTI and Jetta; and the 4-liter 8-cylinder in the Passat W8. No 2003 models are affected, Mr. Fouladpour said, nor is the 2.8-liter V-6 also used in Passats and some older Audis.

He said that the company was working hard to keep its owners happy and that getting enough parts had been the top priority. The German supplier of the defective part has been working three shifts and, starting Jan. 20, twice as many coils have been delivered to the United States.

"We have filled the backlog of orders," Mr. Fouladpour said. "Today, if you come in with a car with a malfunctioning ignition coil, your dealer should be able to, in a very timely manner, get that part."

In the letters to owners, VW and Audi agree to pay for repairs even if the warranty has expired, and to reimburse owners for previous repairs. Dealers will provide loaner or rental cars without charge.

When an ignition coil fails, the owner has two options: either call the toll-free numbers for VW or Audi roadside assistance, which can be found with the owner's manual and other materials in the glovebox, or try to drive the vehicle.

"We don't recommend people drive for an extended period with it," Mr. Fouladpour said. "And they should drive slowly to prevent damage to the catalytic converter."

The situation has left owners like Mr. Navin worried about driving their cars and wondering why the loss of power is not a safety issue that would prompt a recall to replace all the coils. "What if there is a failure while a driver is being tailgated by a tractor-trailer?" he asked.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration "has the matter under review," said a spokeswoman, Liz Neblett.

Even before the coil problems became news, Volkswagens were slipping in the reliability ratings of Consumer Reports. The Passat is the only VW remaining on the magazine's list of recommended vehicles, and "it doesn't need many more problems to put it into the 'unreliable' category," said David Champion, director of automotive testing.

January 29, 2003

U.S. Department of Transportation
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
Office of Defects Investigation
NSA - 10.01
400 7th Street SW
Washington DC 20590

Re: 2002 Volkswagen Passat

Dear NHTSA:

We are writing to urge you to investigate the engine coils on 2002 Volkswagen Passat and initiate an immediate recall.

On Monday, January 13, 2003, an ignition coil failed. The car was towed to Mohegan Lake Motors, and Rob lost a day at work (ATTACHED). On Saturday January 25, 2003, another ignition coil failed. Luckily we were very close to, and were able to reach, Mohegan Lake Motors (ATTACHED).

Both coils failed without any advance warning and car accidents were narrowly averted each time. When each coil failed, the car suddenly lost acceleration and began to shake. This was extremely dangerous as on each occasion we were in traffic, surrounded by other cars and drivers, who could not anticipate the sudden slowing and lurching of our car.

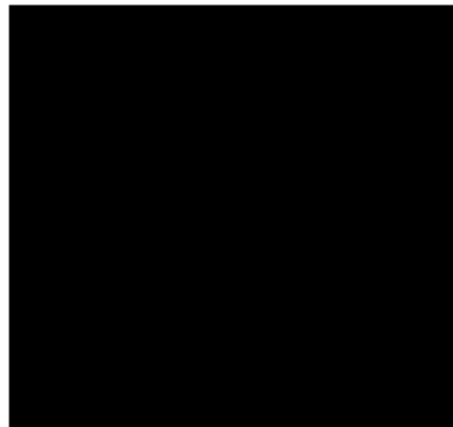
We understand that the ignition coils on many 2002 Volkswagens and Audis are failing, that thousands of owners are experiencing the same danger we experienced on January 13 and 25, and that although Volkswagen is aware of this grave problem they have refused to initiate a recall.

Under Volkswagen instruction Mohegan Lake Motors and the Customer Care Center (phone inquiry number 300-45287, January 27, 2003) have refused to replace the remaining defective coils in our car, insisting that we must wait for each coil to malfunction before it will be replaced.

We are left with a car which we must rely upon for transportation but which may suddenly lose power and break down at any time, without warning. This could have catastrophic or deadly consequences. The problem would be easily remedied if the remaining two defective coils in our car's engine were replaced.

Please begin an immediate investigation into the defective coils in these cars and initiate a recall as soon as possible. We can be contacted at the address below. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Cortlandt Manor, N.Y.

enclosure

Volkswagen of America, Inc.



Volkswagen of America
Attention: VW 48000
Tel: 214-754-2100

January 31, 2003

Dear Volkswagen Customer:

We are writing to provide you with important information about your Volkswagen.

Through our monitoring of vehicles in the field, we have determined that some 2001 and 2002 Volkswagens equipped with the 1.8T four-cylinder engine or the 2.8L VR6, and some 2002 Passats equipped with the W8 may experience a malfunction of an ignition coil. The 2001 and 2002 engines are equipped with four such coils for the 4-cylinder engine, six coils in the 6-cylinder engine and eight coils in the 8-cylinder engine. The coils provide electricity to the spark plugs when you start your engine. Some owners have experienced a malfunction of one or more of these coils. If an ignition coil becomes inoperative, the engine and its electronic controls are designed to keep your vehicle running. Some deterioration in performance, however, can be expected. You can continue to drive with reduced power and should take your car to your nearest Volkswagen dealer for repair. If you do not feel comfortable driving with reduced power, you may call Volkswagen 24-Hour Roadside Assistance at (800) 411-6688 for towing to the nearest dealer.

Should you experience a malfunction, your Volkswagen dealer will be able to repair your car with an improved ignition coil. In order to minimize inconvenience to you, your Volkswagen dealer will offer alternative transportation to you at no cost.

We want to make it clear that your car may not exhibit this problem. However, if you have already experienced this malfunction and for some reason you had to pay to have it repaired, we are, of course, prepared to reimburse you. If this has been your experience, please contact us. We apologize for any inconvenience you may experience and we assure you that resolving this issue is the top priority for Volkswagen of America, Volkswagen AG and our Volkswagen dealers. If you desire any assistance, or have any questions, please contact us at (800) 822-8987 or vw.com click on (contact us).

In closing, you have my personal apology for any inconvenience, and my thanks for your business.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Frank Maguire".

Frank Maguire
Vice President