



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 100145

Date Received

2003 JUN 20
20-MAY-2003

Repository ☐

Reference No.
10020155

OWNER INFORMATION (Type or Print)

Name

Address

City

SPRINGFIELD

State

IL

Zip Code

Daytime Telephone Number

E-mail Address

Evening Telephone Number

(NAME)

Do you authorize NHTSA to provide a copy of this report to the manufacturer of your vehicle? ☒ YES ☐ NO

In the absence of an author

address to the vehicle manufacturer.

Signature of Owner

Date 06/13/03

VEHICLE INFORMATION

Make

MERCEDES BENZ

Model

320

Model Year

1996

Date Purchased

14 OCT. '96

Dealer's Name and Telephone Number

"SUDD'S" MOTORS, 1430 E. Ft. Jesse Rd.

Engine:

No. Cylinders 6

Fuel Type:

Premium

Original Owner

☒

Dealer's City

BLOOMINGTON - NORMAL

State

IL

Zip Code

61761

Transmission Type

AUTO

☐ Antilock Brakes

☒ Cruise Control

Powertrain

Vehicle Component Code

021210 SUSPENSION:FRONT:SPRINGS:COIL SPRINGS

Multiple Failure: 1

FAILED COMPONENT(S)/PART(S) INFORMATION

Incident Date(s)

08-MAY-2003

Failure Mileage

61,000

Failure Speed

30-35 MPH

BROKEN MOUNT BRACKET FOR LEFT
FRONT COIL SPRING

ADDITIONAL ITEMS TO BE COMPLETED WHEN REPORTING A TIRE FAILURE

Tire Make

Tire Model (Name or Number)

Tire Size (Example P215/65R15)

DOT No. (Example: DOT145ABC036)

☐ Original Equipment

☐ Prior Repair

Failure Location:

Tire Component Code

Tire Failure Type

ADDITIONAL ITEMS TO BE COMPLETED WHEN REPORTING A CHILD SEAT FAILURE

Make:

Date Manufactured:

Model No./Name:

Seat Type:

Installation System:

Child Seat Component Code:

Failed Part:

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

Number of Deaths

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).

WHILE DRIVING, THE FRONT LEFT COIL SPRING FAILED. *JB

NOTE: COIL SPRING FLEW OUT OF WHEEL WELL; CAR WEIGHT
FELL ON L. FRONT TIRE. FRONT AIR DAM STRUCK CROWN
IN ROAD. CAR LOST CONTROL; UNABLE TO STEER. COIL
SPRING FLEW INTO TRAFFIC AND ALMOST CAUSED OTHER
VEHICLE ACCIDENTS. OLD PART IS AVAILABLE FOR INSPECTION.

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.

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE. 2

Narrative Description of Incident(s), Failure(s), Crash(es), and Injury(ies)

THIS IS THE 3RD INCIDENT OF COIL SPRING BRACKET FAILURE IN SPRINGFIELD, IL. IN THE MONTH OF MAY, 2003. THE FAILURE IS SO COMMON THAT PARTS ARE STOCKED IN NAPERVILLE, IL. THE REPLACEMENT PARTS APPEAR TO BE IDENTICAL (NO VISIBLE IMPROVEMENT) TO THE FAILED PARTS, PROBABLY AN ENGINEERING DESIGN DEFECT. THEY ARE "SPOT WELDED" TO THE FRAME AND FAIL WHEN RUST FORMS AROUND THE WELD. FAILURE OF BRACKETS SEEMS TO OCCUR AFTER WARRANTY EXPIRES. THE COMPANY REFUSES TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE PROBLEM. REPEATED CALLS + LETTERS TO CHRYSLER - BORG HQ. (N.J.) HAVE BEEN IGNORED OR DISCLAIMED. THEY REFUSE ANY RESPONSIBILITY.

THIS IS A MAJOR PUBLIC SAFETY CONCERN - NATIONWIDE!?

ATTACH ADDITIONAL SHEETS IF NECESSARY

U.S. Department
of Transportation

National Highway
Traffic Safety
Administration

400 Seventh St., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590

Official Business
Penalty for Private Use \$300

BUSINESS REPLY MAIL

FIRST CLASS PERMIT NO 78173 WASHINGTON, D.C.

POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY NATL. HWY. TRAFFIC SAFETY ADMIN.

U.S. Department of Transportation
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
DOT Auto Safety Hotline, NSA-10.1
400 7th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20590

NO POSTAGE
NECESSARY
IF MAILED
IN THE
UNITED STATES

**VEHICLE
OWNER'S
QUESTIONNAIRE**

DOT AUTO SAFETY HOTLINE

TO REPORT VEHICLE SAFETY DEFECTS
COMPLETE THIS FORM
ON

DASH2DOT

and dial toll free at

1-888-DASH-2-DOT

1-888-327-4236

DOT Auto Safety Hotline
(DASH) 2 DOT



U.S. Department of Transportation
National Highway Traffic Safety
Administration
Informational and promotional

Springfield, IL
Phone:

Mr. Paul Halata, Chairman and President
Mercedes-Benz Corporation
#3 Paragon Drive
Montvale, NJ 07645

Dear Mr. Halata:

There appears to be a serious safety concern and possible engineering design defect with some of the E-320 model sedans. The Mercedes-Benz Tech Rep. was notified of this problem on May 10, 2003, but dismissed this complaint and refused any assistance, so I am contacting you directly to request an investigation and resolution.

These are the facts: On May 8, 2003, the left front coil (suspension) spring fell off of my 1996 E-320 while driving about 30 m.p.h. on a flat, well paved city street. This car (serial number WDBJF55F0TJ013082) was purchased new, has less than 65,000 miles, has never been wrecked or incurred any frame damage. If we had been traveling at highway speed, the results could have been disastrous. This coil spring is held in place by a somewhat flimsy perch which is welded to the frame and subject to rust. The front air dam was also damaged when the spring fell off.

My case is not an isolated incident. A computerized search of you maintenance records is unlikely to reflect the extent of this problem, particularly if the vehicle is out of warranty. In my case, the dealership recommended that my car be towed to an auto-body shop for body welding repair. I am sure that this advice was in good faith, but it hides the true extent of the problem since body shops seldom document or report safety hazards. Clearly, your company is facing a serious problem with potential accidents and personal injuries.

Although this particular car is past its warranty period, Mercedes-Benz, in my view, has a responsibility to assume damage and repair costs for all safety issues such as this. I prefer to avoid the inconvenience of filing a class action suit if at all possible, but will pursue this option if necessary.

I have been a loyal Mercedes-Benz owner for more than 27 years and have purchased 5 cars during that period, but my confidence in Mercedes-Benz products has been shaken. A reply from you together with a satisfactory resolution to this problem is requested and would be appreciated.

As a footnote, I would like to add that the courtesy and cooperation from the local dealership (Istringhausen, Inc.) has been very good but on the corporate level ("Customer Relations," etc.) It was complacent, unresponsive, and generally unacceptable.

Sincerely,



Mercedes-Benz

June 2, 2003

Reply:

Mercedes-Benz USA, LLC
Customer Assistance Center

Mileage is 61,000

Springfield, IL

Subject: Model 1996 E320W
Serial No. WDBJF55F0TJ

Dear

Thank you for your letter to our President, Paul Hjalata, who, after review, has asked us to respond on his behalf.

We regret to learn of the need for repairs to your E320 and apologize for any inconvenience you may have experienced.

As our Service and Parts Operations Manager, Scott Hickam, explained in your telephone conversation; he has declined your request for assistance with the repair due to age and mileage of your vehicle. (Our Service and Parts Operations Managers are empowered to make decisions of this type for Mercedes-Benz USA in their areas of responsibility.) As you know, your vehicle was covered by a Limited New Vehicle Warranty of 48 months or 50,000 miles (whichever occurred first), your vehicle is out of that warranty by almost three years.

Many factors beyond the manufacturer's control contribute to the need for repairs. It is our experience that any flaw in workmanship or materials will present itself soon after the vehicle is put into service.

Mr. McDonald, we know this is not the answer that you had hoped for. Your understanding of our company position is appreciated.

Sincerely,

Robyn Letz

Robyn Letz
Customer Relations

RL/vg

~~THEY HAVE~~ IGNORED THE SAFETY ISSUE!
(RM.)



**THE ATTACHMENTS TO THIS
DOCUMENT HAVE BEEN REMOVED
TO PROTECT UNWARRANTED
INVASION OF PERSONAL PRIVACY
PURSUANT TO EXEMPTION 6 OF
THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION
ACT (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. 552(b)(6).**