



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  
(1-888-327-4238)  
INTERNET [www.nhtsa.dot.gov/hotline](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/hotline)

FOR AGENCY USE ONLY 100148

Date Received: 15-JUL-2003  
Repository: PH 1: 01  
Reference No.: 10028345

**OWNER INFORMATION (Type or Print)**

Name: [REDACTED]  
Address: [REDACTED]  
City: CANAL FULTON State: OH Zip Code: [REDACTED]

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

Do you authorize NHTSA to provide a copy of this report to the manufacturer of your vehicle?  YES  NO  
In the absence of your signature, please print your name or address to the vehicle manufacturer.  
Signature of Owner: [REDACTED] Date: 7/18/03

**VEHICLE INFORMATION**

Make: PONTIAC Model: GRAND AM Model Year: 1999  
Date Purchased: 24-JUL-99 Dealer's Name and Telephone Number: Spitzer's Pontiac 330-436-7831  
Original Owner:  Dealer's City: Canton State: OH Zip Code: 44705  
Transmission Type: AUTOMATIC Antilock Brakes:  Powertrain: FRONT WHEEL DRIVE  
 Cruise Control Vehicle Component Code: 021210 SUSPENSION:FRONT:SPRINGS:COIL SPRINGS  
Multiple Failures: 0

**FAILED COMPONENT(S)/PART(S) INFORMATION**

Incident Date(s): 10-JUL-2003 Failure Mileage: 72339 Failure Speed: 20

**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: DOTM4LSABC036): [REDACTED] Original Equipment:  Prior Repair:  Failure Location: [REDACTED]  
Tire Component Code: [REDACTED] The 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: 0 Number of Deaths: 0 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 RIGHT FRONT SPRING ON OUR 1999 GRAND AM BROKE OFF ABOUT A 4 INCH PIECE FROM THE BOTTOM OF THE SPRING. WHEN THE SPRING BROKE OFF, IT SENT THE PIECE THROUGH THE TIRE. IT SOUNDED LIKE A BOMB GOING OFF, IMMEDIATELY BLOWING AND DESTROYING THE TIRE, SENDING THE CAR IMMEDIATELY TO THE GROUND BECAUSE THERE WAS NOTHING HOLDING UP THE FRONT. THE CAR SKIDDED TO A STOP APPROXIMATELY 15 FEET. THANKFULLY, I WAS ONLY TRAVELING 20 MILES AN HOUR ON A SIDE ROAD. IF I WOULD HAVE BEEN TRAVELING AT A HIGHER SPEED ON THE HIGHWAY, IT WOULD HAVE CAUSED A CRASH BECAUSE OF HOW QUICKLY THE CAR DROPPED AND SWERVED TO THE RIGHT. IT COULD HAVE BEEN DISASTROUS AS IT COULD HAVE SPUN THE CAR AROUND, HIT THE CAR TO THE RIGHT AND OR HIT BY A CAR FOLLOWING BECAUSE OF THE SUDDEN IMPACT OF HITTING THE GROUND.

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

The Privacy Act of 1974 (Public Law 93-502) 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.

July 21, 2003

Mr. Alberto A. Jimenez, Chief  
Correspondence Research Division  
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration  
Office of Defects Investigation, NVS-216  
400 - 7<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Mr. Jimenez,

Thank you for your recent correspondence regarding my complaint regarding what I strongly feel is a defect in our 1999 Pontiac Grand Am. As stated on my report, we own a 1999 Pontiac Grand Am. We are the original owners of the car and have well cared for our investment. It has always had service done at the dealer for problems other than regular maintenance. The car has 72,000 miles on it, most of which are highway miles as we travel 100 miles a day to work. This is also our second Grand Am as we previously owned a 1992 Grand Am which our son now drives with over 200,000 miles on it and never a problem with the front suspension. We are loyal GM owners- we also have a 1996 Chevy Blazer and have a GM card with over a thousand dollars toward the purchase of a new GM vehicle which we had all intentions of using until this problem occurred.

On July 10<sup>th</sup>, I was on my way to pick up dinner with my dogs in the car and while leaving the allotment at approximately 20 miles an hour, there was a loud boom which sounded like a bomb going off, the car swerved to the right and dropped, skidding to a stop approximately 15 feet from the original impact. (There are still the skid marks on the road.) The tire was completely flat (sitting on the rim) and the right front of the car was on the ground. My first instinct was that I blew a tire. I was shaken as the noise of the blow and the sudden drop and skidding of the car was enough to shake anyone up including the dogs. It even brought out a few neighbors to see what had happened and who were kind enough to take me and the dogs home to get my husband to help change the tire. What we found when we tried to get the tire off was that because the car was on the ground we could not get enough leverage with the jack from the car to get the car up to get the blown tire off. I had to call AAA to help us get the tire off.

When AAA showed up, they had to raise the front of the car with another jack just to get the tire off. On the ground was a 4-5" piece of metal from the front right spring of the car. The spring snapped on the bottom which sent that piece through the tire leaving a gash in the tire which circled half of the tire. The tire was only 7 months old and was destroyed. The donut was placed on the car, but because the spring was broken, the car was not drivable. It had to be towed. I had it towed to Firestone because that is where I bought the tires for the car and knew that the tire had to be replaced and they could also replace the spring. The two front springs were replaced on the car and I also had the struts replaced as well as a new tire. After I picked up my car, I still have problems as the car is making a creaking noise from the right front. I had the car back at Firestone this past Saturday and the mechanic seems to feel that because of the impact of hitting the ground, the ball joint could have a problem. My next stop will be at the dealership to have it taken care of. It is very annoying and I want to make sure this car is safe.

The purpose of my complaint is I feel I am very lucky to be here and this problem could have caused a major accident and the possibility of serious injuries. As stated above, I travel 50 miles to and from work on very busy highways with major construction. If this spring would have broken while going at a rate of highway speeds (55-65), the car would have gone into the car to the right of me or even worse, I would have hit the car to the right, been hit from behind and probably spun around because of the serious drop of the spring. The Grand

July 21, 2003

Am is low to the ground to begin with and with the force it took me I would have surely hit another vehicle, been hit or hit the concrete barriers in the construction zone. I feel very luck to be here and unharmed.

I contacted GM on July 15<sup>th</sup> to register this problem and was given the case number of S1-119709018. I strongly feel it is GM's responsibility as a car manufacturer to warn every Grand Am owner with at least 50,000 miles on their car to have their springs checked by the dealer or replaced. I had no warning or even a hint that there could be a problem with the spring. In checking your web site, I found 4 other reported cases of the same problem with the front right spring. In all the cases, there was no accident or fatality, but does someone have to get killed because of this problem before something is done. I realize that a recall can be very costly to a company, but if one life is saved because of it, it is worth at least a warning that there could be a potential problem and have your car checked.

I still need to see what additional damage was done to my car and will have it corrected, but my whole point in this complaint is to warn others who own a 1999 Grand Am to PLEASE have your car checked and ask that GM assist in being responsible for their product and warn their customers.

I have enclosed a copy of the service invoice to have the spring and tire replaced and please feel free to contact them regarding this repair. I intend on having the car serviced within the next two weeks to correct the ball joint problem on the right side of the car so please feel free to contact the service dealership, VanDevere also regarding their findings. I still have the piece of metal that broke off the car, but the entire spring I do not have as it was at Firestone.

I appreciate your time and hope you look into this problem further before this turns into a problem that includes a fatality that could and should have been prevented.

Sincerely,

  
Canal Fulton, OH  


cc: Mr Michael J. Jordan, Safety Defects Program Assistant  
Pontiac-GMC Customer Assistance Center

**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).**