



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 1367

Date Received: 08-SEP-2003 11:33  
08-SEP-2003

Repository   
Reference No: 10038414

OWNER INFORMATION (Type or Print)

Name: [Redacted]      Daytime Telephone Number: [Redacted]      E-mail Address: [Redacted]  
Address: [Redacted]  
City: SHELBY TOWNSHIP      State: MI      Zip Code: [Redacted]      Evening Telephone Number: [Redacted]

Do you authorize NHTSA to provide a copy of this report to the manufacturer of your vehicle?  
In the absence of an authorization, NHTSA WILL NOT provide your name or address to the vehicle manufacturer.  YES  NO  
Signature of Owner: [Redacted]      Date: 9/12/03

VEHICLE INFORMATION

1. Reg. Vehicle Identification Number located at bottom of windshield on driver's side: 1GBFGL5R2W1100577      Make: CHEVROLET      Model: G VAN      Model Year: 1996  
Date Purchased: 9/27/02      Dealer's Name and Telephone Number: Joseph Carl Vanderwest JR 586-791-1083      Engine: 9 cyl. Vortec      Fuel Type: Unleaded  
Original Owner:       Dealer's City: Shelby Twp      State: MI      Zip Code: 48316      No. of Cylinders: 8  
Transmission Type: Automatic       Lock/Unlock System:       Cruise Control:       Powertrain: [Redacted]      Vehicle Component Code: 162810 STRUCTURE:BODY:HOOD:HINGE AND ATTACHMENTS  
Multiple Failure: 1

FAILED COMPONENT(S)/PART(S) INFORMATION

Incident Date(s): 8/20/03      Failure Mileage: 51125 61125 sec      Failure Speed: [Redacted]      Passengerside door hinge broke causing doors to jam together and unable to open doors

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 DOTM1A1ABC096): [Redacted]      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), 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 (e.g., parts repaired or replaced (and if old part is available)).

PASSENGER SIDE DOOR HINGE BROKE COMPLETELY OFF WITHOUT EXCESSIVE FORCE BEING APPLIED. DEALERSHIP INDICATED THIS OCCURRED BECAUSE THE DOOR WAS NOT FREQUENTLY USED. DEALERSHIP IN AN ATTEMPT TO REPAIR THE HINGE MADE THE PROBLEM WORSE.\*AK

Include, if available: Police/Fire Department Report, Photos, and Repair Involes.      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.

Case # [REDACTED]

On Friday, 8-22-03 the passenger side hinge broke on my 1998 Chevy Explorer conversion Van. I was traveling out of town with my children - when we made a stop at Kmart in Bad Axe. After loading our purchases in the Van we were closing the side doors when I thought something was stuck in the door, therefore the door would not shut, however, what had really happened was the hinge attached to the door broke causing it not to shut. A clerk helped me tie the doors up so we could get to Poet Austin. I had rearranged my 18 months old car seat so he would not be next to the doors. Then I proceeded to drive about 40 miles an hour to get to Poet Austin. After some time of evaluating the situation my husband had to hack saw the hinge completely apart, this enabled him to close the doors. He also had to remove some of the door spacers.

With the doors now closed we used the Van a couple of times over the weekend by just using the one door on the passenger side.

I drove the Van home on Sunday 8-24-03.

On Monday 8-25-03 my husband took the Van to Buff Whelan Chevy, for an estimate to repair the door hinge. Dan the service manager told us it would cost about \$200.00.

Case # [REDACTED]

On Monday 8-25-03 I called Chevrolet customer service and spoke with Lovely Evans (1-866-952-4368 x 58999) I explained my problem and she asked me how many miles on the vehicle, I said close to 60,000. She filed my service request. Issuing Service Request # 1-133873837. She said we need to take the vehicle to the nearest dealer to get a repair estimate, which we did.

Tuesday 8-26-03 drove my kindergardeners to first day of school, along with my 18 month old, when we arrived at school could not get children out of Van. I finished at school, then proceeded to call Lovely Evans and leave voice mail as to the situation. She calls back and states if you can't get children out of Van, take it to the dealer to get it fixed. Still **No** answer as to whether GM will cover this repair. I speak with Rick Carr at Dealership he states GM will probably cover this under Goodwill. I take Van to dealership and leave it for repair.

8-27-03 ~~8-27-03~~ Lovely Evans leaves a message and states GM will not pay for this repair, there are not any recalls out there, and GM is not paying to fix your Van.

Call# [REDACTED]

8-27-03 I proceeded to call GM Customer Service for further explanation as to why they weren't going to cover the repair. I quoted Service Bulletin 240901 dated 9-24-01 and Service Bulletin 020864012 dated 5-1-02. I called Buff Whelan to find out the status on Van. They said Van would be worked on Friday 8/29/03, that was fine with us because we would be out of town until Sunday.

I did not hear back from Mrs Evans until 8-28-03, she said that my vehicle did not fall under any of the bulletins that I had quoted to her. It was then that I learned through Mrs. Lovely that the dealership felt we did not maintain the hinges on the Van.

I proceeded to call Lee in the body shop at Buff Whelan where I asked him how he concluded that we did not maintain the hinges, he stated because the hinge is broken. He said the hinge and the pin seized together due to no lubrication. I told him I lubed the hinges monthly since I purchased the Van. He said but we dont know what the previous owner did.

My husband and I decided that we needed an unbiased opinion by another dealership regarding Buff Whelan's opinion on maintenance on the pin and hinge.

Case# [REDACTED]

8-28-03 I went to Buff Whelan and spoke with Dan the service Manager and requested that the area Supervisor look at the van. He said if I move the van to the Bomco dealership his area supervisor wouldn't be able to look at the van. He asked if we would leave the van until Friday 8/29/03 and he would have Dan Achino the area supervisor if Gm ~~and~~ would split the costs with me. Late Thursday 8/28/03 I received a call from Rick Carr at Buff Whelan he told me they would split the cost with me.

The van remained at Buff Whelan over the Labor Day weekend and I picked the van up on 9/2/03 (Tuesday). I reviewed the owners manual with ~~Buff~~, about oiling all necessary parts yearly. However I learned in doing this it is not enough to stop this type of problem. You actually need to remove the pin apply lubrication then put the pin back into the hinge.

After leaving the dealership I had realized the mileage was 143 miles higher than when I left it there. When I got home in my van I could not open the door to get my son out. Turned around at my house dropped my son at my parents and went back to Buff Whelan in van.

I addressed Tee in the Body Shop as to why the doors do not open after I had just paid to have them fixed.

Case# [REDACTED]

He told me propably the vibration from driving van caused the conversion Body panels to shift, I stated didnt you drive my van before I picked it up, he said NO all he did was open and close the doors about 40 times. I pointed out the door spacers were not put back in my van and if a service was paid to come in and touchup and remove the conversion body panels then why are they shifting. He said because they are attached with plastic screws. I told him they were not shifting before this company removed and reinstalled them. I then asked Lee if you never drove my van, how come 143 miles were placed on the vehicle. He was not sure but blamed it on human error when recording original miles. I know that to be untrue I stood there and watched as the service work order was completed and I walked to the vehicle for mileage verification.

I asked Lee how was he going to fix this problem now to get my doors open. He said he felt the other hinges themselves were bent and he wanted to stick a bar from hinge to hinge and apply pressure to bend the hinges back. I expressed that a hinge can only withstand so much pressure before it breaks and Lee said yes that is true but he did not know how much pressure they could withstand.

Case# [REDACTED]

I asked who was going to pay for this process, he said they were however if a hinge broke I would be responsible for the costs. After evaluating the situation I decided I better let my husband look at this, because I could really be incurring some hefty repair bills. I also asked Lee to explain why my portion of the repair bill was so high. He said because when the vehicle was brought in the work estimate \$ amount was the customer rate and when GM gets involved the rate more than doubles but no where along the way did anyone inform me of these changes.

The dealership could not produce all of the replaced parts when asked to see them. They could only account for the hinge and one pin but two pins were replaced according to the bill. A mechanic named Mike who brought out the parts explained what happened with the pin seizing up due to no lubrication however he said that just lubing the hinge and pin every year will not stop this problem. You need to work the door back and forth with a lubricant for some time to make sure the lubricant is down inside the hinge. Then told me this problem could happen to me again in around two years. At that

Case # [redacted]

point Lee scolded him and told him to go back to work.

\*\*\* Reminders: This is the second door on the passenger side. This is a door that is not used very often.

Lee told me to speak with my husband and bring the van back on Wednesday 9/3/03 morning, and they would work on the vehicle that day to fix the doors.

After discussing this with my husband, there was no way we could honestly take the van back to Buff. Whelan Chev. Our sense of trust/worthiness was gone.

My husband, an engineer, determined the hinges were not bent, the dealership broke the clips and screws on the interior conversion panels and this caused them to shift. My husband drilled into the frame of the door and placed permanent steel screws into the conversion panels.

This seems to have corrected the problem and the panels can no longer shift.

However this does not excuse the dealership for not fixing the vehicle right the first time, and when you return to a dealership to get the problem fixed again you do not

Case: [REDACTED]

expect them to come up with some half wired scheme to collect a problem that does even exist. If this dealership would have taken a ~~minute~~ a few moments to test drive the vehicle and then reassess a problems at that time we would not be to this point. But when you fail to do your job right the first time you may caused harm to myself and my family and I will have no one put my boys safety in jeopardy.

I also have contacted National Highway Traffic Safety Administration regarding this problem.

People don't mind paying for a job as long as the job is don right. They don't want to keep bringing it back time and again when it should have been don right the first time. Especially when safety is concerned.

**Customer Claim Form**

Case Number [redacted]  
Contact Date : 09/09/03  
Start Date :

Have you contacted the mfr regarding your claim.?  YES  NO

**Customer Name Address**

[redacted]

Fax Number:  
Customer Contact Info:

Evening Phone:  
E-mail address : [redacted]

**Vehicle Information**

Name(s) that appear on vehicle title: [redacted]  
Is Vehicle titled to a business: no Percentage of time vehicle used for business purposes:  
Transmission Type: Number of vehicles owned or leased by the business : 0  
Make: Chevrolet Model: Van Model Year: 1998 Current Mileage: 81295  
Vehicle Identification Number: 1G8EG15R2W1100577  
Servicing Dealer/City/State : BUFF WHELAN CHEVROLET INC  
Selling Dealer/City/State :  
Insurance Carrier : Citizens Policy Number: [redacted]  
Has vehicle been in an accident/had body damage? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ X Date of accident: [redacted]  
Description of Damage :

**Purchase/Lease Information** (complete left side if vehicle was purchased or right side if vehicle was leased)

Purchase Date: 08/27/02 Mileage at purchase: Lease Date: Mileage at lease:  
Purchased As : Used Leased As :  
Is the vehicle in your possession? yes Is the vehicle in your possession?  
Lienholder's Name: [redacted] Leasing Company's Name:  
Address: [redacted] Address:  
City/St/Zip: [redacted] City/St/Zip:  
Phone: [redacted] Phone:  
Lienholder Acct # : [redacted] Leasing Company's Acct #:

**Resolution Sought**

GM to reimburse me for my portion of the costs involved in fixing this problem. Explanation as to why 143 miles were put on my vehicle when in for repair and why vehicle not fixed right the first time.

Problem: hinge broke on passenger side door of conversion van where children sit. I could not open doors to get them out incase of fire or accident. After being fixed they still did not open.

Signature of Owner(s) [redacted] Date 9/24/03

I am authorizing any lender/lessor to disclose to the BBB AUTO LINE program all information relating to the financing or lease of the vehicle named on this Customer Claim Form.

Return the Form to: BBB AUTO LINE, 4200 Wilson Blvd., Suite 800, Arlington Va, 22203-1838



**buff whelan** 

**larry denys** • asst. collision center manager  
**586-939-7300 fax 586-939-8848**  
**direct 586-939-9490**

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ACT (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. 552(b)(6).**