



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 100083

Date Received
2003 NOV -4 PM 3:
24-SEP-2003

Repository
Reference No.
10040522

OWNER INFORMATION (Type or Print)

Name: [Redacted]
Address: [Redacted]
City: SICKLERVILLE State: NJ Zip Code: [Redacted]

Daytime Telephone Number: [Redacted] E-mail Address: [Redacted]
Evening Telephone Number: Same

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 use your name or address to the vehicle manufacturer.
Signature of Owner: [Redacted] Date: 10/22/03 YES NO

VEHICLE INFORMATION

17 digit Vehicle Identification Number located at bottom of windshield on driver's side: 1B4GT54LXV3454692
Make: DODGE Model: GRAND CARAVAN Model Year: 1997
Date Purchased: 6/1/99 Dealer's Name and Telephone Number: Martin Dodge 856-629-4305
Original Owner: Dealer's City: Turnersville State: NJ Zip Code: 08012
Engine: No. Cylinders: Fuel Type: Gas
Transmission Type: AUTOMATIC Antilock Brakes Powertrain: ALL WHEEL DRIVE
 Cruise Control Vehicle Component Code: 104000 POWER TRAIN; TRANSFER CASE (4-WHEEL DRIVE)
Multiple Failure: 1

FAILED COMPONENT(S)/PART(S) INFORMATION

Incident Date(s): 23-AUG-2003 Failure Mileage: 62,000 Failure Speed: 25-40 MPH

ADDITIONAL ITEMS TO BE COMPLETED WHEN REPORTING A TIRE FAILURE

Tire Make: N/A Tire Model (Name or Number): N/A Tire Size (Example P215/65R15): N/A
DOT No. (Example: DOTM4LSABC036) 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: N/A Date Manufactured: [Redacted] Model No./Name: [Redacted]
Seat Type: N/A 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: See letter Number of Deaths: 0 Reported to Police: Yes

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).

CONSUMER CALLED COMPLAINING ABOUT HAVING PROBLEMS WITH ENGINE AND TRANSFER CASE. ALSO, WHILE DRIVING VEHICLE HAD A FLAT TIRE. STOPPED TO PUT IN THE SPARE TIRE, AND STARTED DRIVING FOR ABOUT 10 MILES WHEN SUDDENLY THE VEHICLE STARTED SMOKING. VEHICLE WAS TAKEN INTO A REPAIR SHOP, AND CONSUMER WAS TOLD THAT TRANSFER CASE HAD BURNED OUT AND IT WAS BECAUSE THE SPARE TIRE WAS NOT THE SAME SIZE AS THE REGULAR TIRE. TRANSFER CASE BURNED OUT BECAUSE THIS WAS AN ALL WHEEL DRIVE, AND IF THE SAME SIZE TIRE WAS NOT USED THERE WOULD BE CONSEQUENCES WAS CONTACTED, AND STATED THAT THERE WAS A TSB ON 2000 VEHICLES WHICH INDICATED THE PROBLEM, BUT CONSUMER'S WARRANTY EXPIRED. *AK See attached letter

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 Administration 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.

October 22, 2003

[REDACTED]
Sicklerville, NJ [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Fax: [REDACTED]

**U.S. Department of Transportation
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
400 Seventh Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590**

Reference No.: 10040522

Dear Sir or Madam,

On August 24, 2003 while spending the day at the Jersey shore (Ocean City), my husband was parking our 1997 Grand Caravan along a curb on the street. He hit the curb and the tire went flat. He changed the tire with the compact tire that came with the van when we bought it in 1997. We took the back roads home and as we were driving through Mayslanding, which is about 10-15 miles outside of Ocean City, the van started smoking. All lights went out and the van died. We coasted to the side of the road. It was approximately 11:00 at night and we had our four young children with us. Because we were on a deserted back road, with no vehicle lights and smoke pouring out of the van, we walked with the children to a closed bar and called 911 on our cell phone. The police arrived and stayed with us until they were able to get us a cab.

The cab driver recommended an auto repair service center down the road from where we broke down (Kneble's). The next day I drove down to Mayslanding and had Kneble's tow the van on a flat bed.

I received a call from Kneble's on August 25th. The employee said that our transfer case had "burnt up". I asked how could this happen? The employee said that Kneble's had done some

research because it was mysterious to them as well. They found a service bulletin that was issued by Chrysler warning that if different size tires are used on all wheel drive vehicles, then the "Power Transfer Unit will fail caused by extreme heat build up caused by a continuous difference of rotation speeds and torque transfer". The Kneble's employee said because we used the compact tire, this happened.

I called our local Chrysler dealership in Williamstown, NJ. at phone number [REDACTED]. I was told by [REDACTED] that they could not help us and to call Chrysler Customer Service. I called customer service at phone number 800-222-1701 and spoke to [REDACTED]. She said to call our local dealership that she could not help us. I told her they said they could not either and I insisted on an answer from her. She said to have the work done and send all invoices to: Formal Complaint, Attn: Customer Service, PO Box 600, Horsham, Pa. 19044.

I told my husband about the phone calls I had made. On August 26th he started making phone calls to Chrysler. I researched the Internet and found a web site of an individual that stated that I needed to open a case file and gave a phone number of 800-992-1997.

I called that number and spoke to [REDACTED]. I told her I wanted to open a case file. She stated that we were not supposed to "go over 50 miles per hour or 50 miles". I told her we did not do either. She was documenting the entire conversation. She issued case #11604629. She said to call [REDACTED] at our Chrysler dealership about fixing the car. I asked if Chrysler would pay for the towing to Williamstown which is about 35 miles and a new transfer case. She said they would decide that after they looked at the van. I told her that because Chrysler was evasive and hostile to my questions, I felt that turning the van over to them was risky.

I called [REDACTED] at Chrysler in Williamstown. He said he could look at the van on Monday. I told him I needed it on Friday as we were going away. He said Monday was the earliest he could

look at the van. My husband discovered that Chrysler's fee was \$300.00 more than Kneble's.

My husband and I decided that we trusted Kneble's to work on our van and that we did not trust Chrysler at all. We also felt that it would cost another \$300.00 to have Chrysler fix the van and the towing would be at least another \$200.00. We gave Kneble's the ok to fix the van.

On September 8th I sent a certified letter to Chrysler to ask for a refund. On September 23rd I sent a fax of the letter to [REDACTED] at Chrysler because we had not received a response to the certified letter. On September 24th I received a phone call from [REDACTED], a Chrysler employee. [REDACTED] said Chrysler denied our request for a refund because:

1. We hit a curb.
2. The van is out of warranty.
3. We did not purchase an extended warranty.
4. The van was not fixed by a Chrysler dealer.
5. There is no recall on the compact tires.

I have not received a written copy of the denial. [REDACTED] was rude and said she did not want any more information from me. She said the matter was closed.

I called Chrysler at phone number 800-992-1997 and spoke to [REDACTED]. He researched his computer and concurred with [REDACTED]. He was also rude and suggested that I contact the Highway Safety Department. I then called the National Highway Transportation Safety Institute and spoke to [REDACTED].

My husband and I believe that Chrysler put us and our four children in danger that night because they issued spare tires that they admit would damage our van. Our two girls were afraid to drive in the van for weeks and they still are uptight when we drive it. Chrysler issued a service bulletin stating that "PTU failures due to mismatched tires are not warrantable" yet they issued mismatched tires (compact tires) to all wheel drive vehicles. A Chrysler owner assumes that the manufacturer would not issue parts that would damage their vehicle. We have recently purchased a new full sized spare tire and rim.

We are asking for the following reimbursements from Chrysler:

1. Transfer case including labor, towing, & tax:
2. Wheel Rim (for new spare):
3. Spare Tire:
4. Cab fare:



Total:

Enclosed are the following documents and invoices:

1. Service bulletin issued by Chrysler dated July 28, 2000.
2. Invoice from Chrysler to purchase wheel rim dated 9/26/03.
3. Invoice from Kneble's Auto Service Center dated Aug 29, 2003.
4. Letter dated September 8, 2003 from [REDACTED] to Daimler Chrysler.
5. Copy of certified receipt dated SEP 8 2003.
6. Copy of return receipt dated 9/18/03.
7. Copy of receipt from SAM'S Club for new spare tire dated 10/10/03.

Please note: We did keep the burnt transfer case.

Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,



**cc: [REDACTED]
enclosures**

Transfer Case: All Technical Service Bulletins
All Wheel Drive - Power Transfer Unit Failure
NUMBER: 21-05-00

GROUP: Transmission

DATE: July 28, 2000

SUBJECT:
All Wheel Drive Power Transfer Unit Failure

MODELS:
996 - 2000 (NS) Town & Country/Caravan/Voyager
996 - 2000 (GS) Chrysler Voyager (International Markets)
001 (RS) Town & Country/Caravan/Voyager
001 (RG) Chrysler Voyager (International Markets)

DISCUSSION:
The All Wheel Drive (AWD) system used on Minivans uses a Power Transfer Unit (PTU) that connects the front drive components to the rear drive components. The PTU may fail if identical tires are not used on all four wheels. This kind of PTU failure is the result of extreme heat build up caused by a continuous difference of rotation speeds and torque transfer between the front and rear drive components when different size tires are used on the front wheels versus the rear wheels.

A difference in tire circumference measurements as small as 0.5 % is enough to cause a PTU failure. PTU failures related to mismatched tires are not warrantable.

Important points to be remembered and to remind AWD minivan vehicle operators:

- Tires should be rotated every 7,500 miles or less to maintain even tread wear.
- Correct tire air pressure must be maintained.
- When tire replacement is necessary all 4 tires must be replaced with a matched (same manufacturer, model, and size) set.

POLICY: Information Only

September 8, 2003

[REDACTED]
Sicklerville, NJ [REDACTED]

**Daimler Chrysler
Attn: Reimbursement
POB 610207
Port Huron, MI 48061**

**Re: Refund for damages
Case #11604629**

Dear Sir or Madam,

I have been a Chrysler owner for many years starting with my 1964 Plymouth Belvedere, 1976 Dodge Charger, 1985 Fifth Avenue, and our current 1997 Grand Caravan. I would not have guessed that Chrysler would treat me with such disregard when our current problem arose.

At your request we are sending to you an Itemized Invoice of damages incurred on August 24, 2003 due to the use of your compact spare tire. Also enclosed is a Service Bulletin that was issued by Chrysler in the year 2000.

We are seeking full reimbursement for the replacement of our transfer case, towing charges, a new spare tire and rim, and cost for a cab home (\$[REDACTED] from Mayslanding, NJ to Sicklerville, NJ).

On the night that our transfer case burnt up, we were stranded on a deserted road with our four young children.

Please refer to our case file for details of this incident. Please respond to our request within two weeks of receipt.

Sincerely,
[REDACTED]

**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).**