



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 1220

Date Received

2004 OCT 15

20-SEP-2004

Repository ☐

Reference No.
10092844

OWNER INFORMATION (Type or Print)

Name

Address

City WESTLAKE VILLAGE

State CA

Zip Code

Daytime Telephone Number

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 your name or address to the vehicle manufacturer.
Signature of Owner Date 10/6/04

VEHICLE INFORMATION

17 digit Vehicle Identification Number Located at bottom of windshield on driver's side

19UUA862X4A

Make

ACURA

Model

TL

Model Year

2004

Date Purchased

Dealer's Name and Telephone Number

ACURA 1014105+ 918 222 5555

Engine:

No. Cylinders

5 6

Fuel Type:

Original Owner

☐

Dealer's City

CALIFORNIA

State

CA

Zip Code

Transmission Type

A

☒ Antilock Brakes

☒ Cruise Control

Powertrain

Vehicle Component Code

063100 ENGINE AND ENGINE COOLING; EXHAUST SYSTEM; EMISSION

Multiple Failure: 2

FAILED COMPONENT(S)/PART(S) INFORMATION

Incident Date(s)

01-JUN-2004

Failure Mileage

Failure Speed

KNOCK SENSOR WIRE

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: DOTM18A8C036)

☐ 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).

THE KNOCK SENSOR WIRE SENDS EMISSION FROM THE ENGINE. IF THERE IS A PROBLEM WITH EMISSION THE SENSOR IS SUPPOSE TO ADJUST THE FUEL. HOWEVER, THE CHECK ENGINE LIGHT ILLUMINATES. TOOK VEHICLE TO THE DEALER. HOWEVER, THE PROBLEM HAD NOT BEEN RESOLVED. *AK

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.

ROBERT E. LEWIS
HERALD B. GALE
HAROLD D. BASS

FARHAD KAZEMZADEH
CANDACE C. BLEWER

OF COUNSEL
LAWRENCE J. POTRET
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TEHAMA PARK, CA 95066
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REPLY TO LOS ANGELES
FILE NO.

October 6, 2004

US. Department of Transportation
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
Office of Defects Investigation, NVS-216
400 7th Street, SW
Washington, CA 20590

Re:

Reference #10092844

Dear Sir or Madame:

I have enclosed with the Vehicle Owner Questionnaire ("VOQ") letters sent to Thomas Elliott, Executive Vice-President of American Honda Motor Co., who manufactures Acura outlining the problem for your assistance. It is their position that it is a non-warranty claim item and that me, the consumer, must continue, for as long as I own the car to pay for this repair. The first repair cost, less than three months after purchase was \$625.00 and within three days occurred again.

In addition, since these letters I have discovered additional information, which is outlined below, to assist you in the investigation of this matter.

The problem, as stated in the VOQ is only partial correct. The Knock Sensor Wire ("KSW") is an integral part of the drive-by-wire throttle system designed for my vehicle. This system was described by Acura, at the following url <http://www.honda.ca/AcuraEng/Models/TL/Benefits.htm> as follows:

"DIRECT IGNITION AND DETONATION-KNOCK CONTROL

Optimum ignition spark timing is crucial to engine power and efficiency, and varies based on engine load, RPM, temperature and other factors. The Powertrain Control Module (PCM) monitors engine functions to determine the best spark timing. *An engine block-mounted acoustic detonation-knock sensor "listens" to the engine.* Based on this input, the PCM retards the ignition timing incrementally to prevent potentially damaging detonation. Platinum-tipped sparkplugs are applied, each with an individual coil unit positioned above in the access bore, require no service prior to 168,000 km. (emphasis added)

In addition, this system is designed to reduce harmful emissions. Thus, if the system is

NHTSA

Re: [REDACTED]

Reference 10092844

October 6, 2004

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inoperable, the emissions of the vehicle would be uncontrolled and could potentially result in the release of emissions greater than legally allowed.

It appears from information I have gathered, that the sheathing of the KSW is a soy based product, i.e., a foodstuff. Thus, if the rodents are eating this wire of the literally hundreds which comprise the vehicle, because it is food for them, then it is incumbent on Acura to address this issue and not bury their heads in the sand.

When a consumer purchases a \$35,000 vehicle from a company like Acura, who prides itself on providing a top shelf vehicle to compete with Mercedes and BMW, and spends the money it does to promote this fact, to learn that the vehicle is defective in a critical area is disconcerting. Moreover, to learn that this problem will continue to occur, not be covered by warranty and that my cost would be in excess of \$600 each time the problem occurs is hard to take. I am sure that if it was a warranty issue, Acura would immediately have their R&D department come up with a fix. Instead, they are leaving their customers hanging and allowing them to drive a car that could fail.

The KSW, on my vehicle was replaced again yesterday. Once again I was informed by service advisors at Acura 101 West ("AW") (818.222.5555) that the problem occurs all the time and that nothing can be done to correct the problem. Yesterday's repair cost was paid for by Acura as a "good will gesture" but this is simply a bandaid for a larger problem.

I have been told, by an Acura representative, that the engine can stall or fail, if the KSW is not operable because of the sensing it performs on the engine.

This is not an isolated problem but is occurring throughout the country and only with this particular wire. Based upon Acura's website, the same KSW is also part of the MDX model. I have not searched the net to determine whether or not people are having this problem but have been told by the service people at AW that the MDX has the same problem.

If you require any further information, please contact me at my office, [REDACTED] or my home [REDACTED]

Thank you for your assistance.

[REDACTED]

ROBERT E. LEWIS
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REPLY TO: LOS ANGELES
FILE NO.

September 10, 2004

Thomas Elliott
Executive Vice-President
Automotive Operations
American Honda Motor Co.
1919 Torrance Blvd.
Torrance, CA 90501

VIA FAX AND MAIL

Re: [REDACTED]-2004 Acura TL
Case No.: B012004-09-07011

Dear Mr. Elliott:

As a follow-up to my letter of September 7, 2004, I have inserted in this letter the url of a bulletin board associated with Acura-TL.com website where various owners of the 2004 Acura TL have identified the same problem.

The url is: <http://www.acura-tl.com/forums/showthread.php?t=86162&page=1&pp=25>.

In reviewing this site, it is conclusive that the problem I have is not unique but is widespread across the county. According to one of the persons who posted a note, the problem is that the knock sensor wire and/or the connectors are a soy bean based product that attracts the rodents. An Acura technician told this information to him.

Acura cannot allow this problem to continue without either immediate action or through the intervention of the courts by way of a class action lawsuit.

Please contact the undersigned immediately to discuss this matter.

Very truly yours,

[REDACTED]

ROBERT E. LEWIS
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REPLY TO LOS ANGELES
FILE NO.

September 7, 2004

Thomas Elliott
Executive Vice-President
Automotive Operations
American Honda Motor Co.
1919 Torrance Blvd.
Torrance, CA 90501

VIA FAX AND MAIL

Re: [REDACTED] 2004 Acura TL
Case No.: B012004-09-07011

Dear Mr. Elliott:

In June 2004 I leased an Acura TL from Acura 101 West in Calabasas. During the first few months of ownership I was extremely pleased with the car, especially the performance and mileage. All of that changed the last weekend in August.

The check engine light came on a week ago Saturday. Since I was due to have the first service, I contacted the dealership and made an appointment to have the oil changed and to have, what surely would be a warranty repair, the problem associated with the check engine light checked and repaired.

Much to my surprise, my service writer informed me, that the problem was not a covered problem in that, allegedly a rodent ate the Knock Sensor Wire, part number 130531-RCA-A00. This wire is located internally in the engine somewhere near the intake manifold, I believe. The cost to repair this problem was \$595.83, of which \$588 was labor. In addition they required me to pay the cost of the rental car as the work was not covered by the warranty. The car was repaired and pick-up on Wednesday, September 1, 2004.

In speaking with my service writer, Miguel Cuenca, I was told that this particular problem had occurred before and in fact, he had a client that experienced the same problem, twice in one

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ABLON, LEWIS, BASS & GALE, LLP

Thomas Elliott

Re: [REDACTED]

September 7, 2004

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week. I was also under the impression, from speaking with him, that he had other clients with the same problem. I also was told that the only cars effected were the TL and the MDX but not the other Acura models.

This past Saturday, when I started the car, once again the check engine light came on. I went to the Acura dealer, and after a few choice words demanding the name of the corporate level service manager, which was refused, I spoke with Kurt Keener, the sales manager. They took my car to the service bay to be analyzed and sure enough, they discovered the same problem with the same part.

In speaking with Mr. Keener, in the service department about this problem, one of the other service writers, Robbie, stated that "this problem occurs all the time." Needless to say, when informed by two service writers that they were aware of this problem, and the apparent frequency of this problem, it was evident that this was a systemic and not an isolated problem. It must be noted that the problem is only with the particular Knock Sensor Wire and not any other wire.

Today, I spoke with Allan Glass, the service manager at Acura 101 West. His position was that it was a non-warranty repair, that there was nothing he could do and that his only suggestion was to purchase rat traps. With a comment like that, I hung up the phone. I am sure that this is not how you want your representatives to speak to customers. It also left me with the impression that since the dealership makes so much money from doing this repair that it was in their best interest to do nothing rather than acknowledge that a serious problem exists.

I called your office to voice my complaint but was informed that you were in a meeting and that I would be transferred to customer service. I spoke to Marco who was quite helpful but who also indicated that it was doubtful that anything could be done as no one designs the car to be rodent proof. He also acknowledged that this was not the first case he had with this same problem. A case number was assigned and which is referenced above.

No one would want to or could afford to repair their brand new car once or twice a week, if not more, at approximately \$600.00 per repair. As you can imagine, this is a serious problem, which cannot go on without immediate attention.

It is my non-expert opinion that the design of the housing for this wire and/or the Knock Sensor Wire, or both are defective in that it is this space and/or particular wire which is causing the problem and not all the other wires which comprise the vehicle.

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Thomas Elliott

Re: [REDACTED]

September 7, 2004

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By way of background, I live in Westlake Village, an area where the home prices average more than \$1,000,000. Thus, I do not live in a rural community but there are open areas near my home. The client of my service writer who had this same problem twice in one week, lives in Calabasas, also an affluent area. We are your target demographic for the TL and MDX. My fiancée, owns an MDX which she purchased approximately two weeks before me and since, we live together, her car is also at risk for this problem based upon the comments by the service writers.

Because I have taken the time necessary to file a formal complaint and write this letter to you, explaining in detail the problem, I expect a formal response to my complaint.

Please respond to this letter immediately. If it will take some time to research the problem and respond, it would be appreciated if contact is made with me that this letter was received and you are addressing the problem. Absent that, further steps will need to be taken.

If you require any further information or have any questions, please contact the undersigned.

Very truly yours,

[REDACTED]