



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 252

Date Received

05-JAN-2005

Repository ☐

Reference No.
10106888

OWNER INFORMATION (Type or Print)

Name [REDACTED]

Daytime Telephone Number [REDACTED]

E-mail Address [REDACTED]

Address [REDACTED]

Evening Telephone Number [REDACTED]

City MOUNT VERNON

State WA

Zip Code [REDACTED]

Do you authorize NHTSA to provide a copy of this report to the manufacturer of your vehicle? ☒ YES ☐ NO
In the absence of an authorized signature to the vehicle manufacturer.

Signature of Owner [REDACTED] Date 1/18/05

VEHICLE INFORMATION

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

JH4KA956VC

Make
ACURA

Model
3.5RL

Model Year
1997

Date Purchased

Dealer's Name and Telephone Number

Foothills Toyota 360 757-7575

Engine:
No: Cylinders 6

Fuel Type:
Gas

Original Owner
☒

Dealer's City

Burlington

State
WA

Zip Code
98233

Transmission Type
AUTOMATIC

☒ Antilock Brakes
☒ Cruise Control

Powertrain
4 WHEEL DRIVE

Vehicle Component Code Front Passenger
021540 SUSPENSION:FRONT:CONTROL ARM:LOWER BALL JOINT

Multiple Failure: 1 Ball Joint Stud Broke

FAILED COMPONENT(S)/PART(S) INFORMATION

Incident Date(s)

05-JAN-2005 01/05
05-JAN-05

Failure Mileage

Failure Speed

10

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: DOTM19ABC036)

☐ 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

1

Number of Deaths

0

Reported to Police

Washington State Patrol

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 CONSUMER WAS TRAVELING VEHICLE STOPPED. CONSUMER HAD THE VEHICLE TOWED TO THE DEALER, AND MECHANIC DETERMINED THAT THE METAL STUB SHEARED OFF FROM THE LOWER BALL JOINT. MECHANIC INFORMED CONSUMER THAT THE LEFT AND RIGHT BALL JOINTS NEEDED TO BE REPLACED. *AK

Mechanic informed me that the passenger front ball joint stud had broken off. The car had been worked on in this same shop only two weeks earlier (replaced upper control arm). The mechanic said that he had looked at the passenger front lower ball joint and saw no indication of any safety concern. That, coupled with no warning noise, constitutes a major safety concern.

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.

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

See enclosed letter with details

Acura of Canada has written to me and stated "As your vehicle is currently operated in the United States, in addition to the vehicle being outside the warranty parameters, Honda Canada is not in a position to assist you with the cost of the repairs." When I gave Honda Canada my V.I.N. #, they said that there are no recalls on my vehicle. Therefore, others with this vehicle part could easily have the same problem with no warning and far worse consequences. I was driving at the top of a hairpin curve going only 10-12 m.p.h.

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 73173 WASHINGTON, D.C.

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

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

NO POSTAGE
NECESSARY
IF MAILED
IN THE
UNITED STATES



**VEHICLE
OWNER'S**

QUESTIONNAIRE

DOT AUTO SAFETY HOTLINE

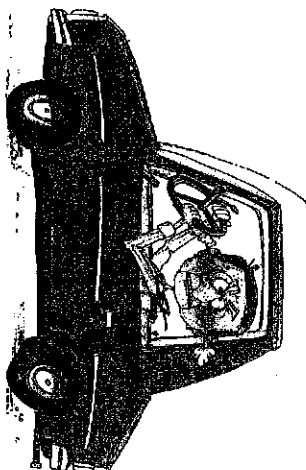
**TO REPORT VEHICLE SAFETY DEFECTS
COMPLETE THIS FORM
OR**

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
www.nhtsa.dot.gov/hotline

Auto Recalls: ACURA - TL - 1996 -- Nolo

Auto Recalls: **ACURA** - TL - 1996 -- Nolo ... Auto Recalls > Vehicles > **ACURA** > TL > 1996 ... 1996
ACURA TL - SUSPENSION:FRONT:CONTROL ARM:LOWER BALL JOINT

YOU MIGHT WANT TO CALL THE NHTSA PHONE # AT BOTTOM.

Make : ACURA

Model : RL

Year : 1998

Build Dates : 19970916 - 19980221

NHTSA CAMPAIGN ID Number : 99V069000

Date Owner's Notified:
19990517

Date Received by ODI:
19990510

Date Added to Database:
19990510

Manufacturer's Involved: AMERICAN HONDA MOTOR CO.

Manufacturer's Responsible for the Recall: AMERICAN HONDA MOTOR CO.

Manufacturer Campaign Number:

Component: SUSPENSION:FRONT:CONTROL ARM:LOWER BALL JOINT

Potential Number Of Units Affected : 124875

Summary:

VEHICLE DESCRIPTION: PASSENGER VEHICLES. CERTAIN VEHICLES WERE MANUFACTURED WITH BALL JOINTS THAT CAN PREMATURELY WEAR OUT AND, IN THE WORSE CASE, THE BALL JOINT WOULD SEPARATE CAUSING THE FRONT SUSPENSION TO COLLAPSE.

Consequence:

THIS CONDITION WOULD RESULT IN VEHICLE DECELERATION AND A SUDDEN LOSS OF POWER. ALSO STEERING CONTROLLABILITY WOULD BE REDUCED.

Remedy:

DEALERS WILL REPLACE THE FRONT SUSPENSION LOWER BALL JOINTS.

Report Initiator: MFR

Vehicles Report

Regulation Part Number:

Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard Number:

Notes:

CUSTOMERS CAN ALSO CONTACT THE NATIONAL HIGHWAY TRAFFIC SAFETY ADMINISTRATIONS AUTO SAFETY HOTLINE AT 1-888-DASH-2-DOT (1-888-327-4236).

FROM CANADA:

Make: ACURA

Model: 3.5RL

Affected Year(s): 1996 1997 1998

Units Affected: 10190

TC Recall #: 1999101

Manufacturer:

Campaign Code:

Recall Details

On certain vehicles, the front suspension lower ball joints may prematurely wear out due to improper finishing of the surface of the spherical portion of the ball joints between the front lower arm and knuckle. Although a loosening ball joint

3/22/06

Mr. Alberto Jimenez

2006 APR 12 AM 11:00

I am writing re: my safety concerns attached. Acura's outcome of their "investigation" was that it was a matter of possible rough use by a previous owner. This part had been recalled & replaced and then failed with no warnings. My mother & I survived this accident, most likely because I was only going 10-15 m.p.h. at the time. All emergency personnel involved said that the car would have

Maria
4/13/06

not rolled but flipped over had it been going at a more normal rate of speed.

I've enclosed repair records from about 2 weeks prior to the accident to show that there was no external evidence to show that this ball joint stud was ready to break in half.

I had to pay for the repair for parts & labor, the deductible for the insurance claim and it counted against me re: my insurance which

- 3 -

gave them an excuse to
raise my rates. More
important than any of
that, Acura failed to
see this as a safety
issue so other owners
will know nothing of this
risk. I want to go
on record as someone who
could have very easily been
killed as a result of this
faulty part and does not want
to see other Acura owners
remain at Risk. [REDACTED]

will emit some noise, in the worst case the ball joint may separate without prior warning. A separated ball joint can result in an apparent sudden loss of power, reduced steering control and a possible crash. Correction: The front suspension lower ball joints will be replaced.

Bill Holt State Farm Sno. 360 568 8505
AAA 1-800 559 8503

How do you know if you need to replace your ball joints/control arms?

There is a rubber boot that encloses the joint; inspect the boot for cracks or other damage. Another sign is clunking in the left or right front suspension; it starts off very subtle but will get worse as time goes on. I damaged my left ball joint when I hit a pot hole, it hit real hard!

You can also check for free-play in the ball joint. Use a large pair of pipe wrench pliers (commonly called "channel lock pliers"). Put the upper jaw on the steering knuckle tab into which the ball stud is inserted. Put the lower jaw of the pliers on the underside of the control arm. Compress the pliers. If you see more than roughly a millimeter of play, the ball joint requires replacement. (Many manufacturers publish specifications for allowed play in ball joints. Unfortunately Porsche does not.)

You cannot measure fatigue or damage to the ball joint stud. It would be possible to check it using a dye penetrant test, but this is beyond most shade tree mechanics' abilities. The only realistic approach to this problem is probably automatic replacement as some service interval, perhaps 100,000 miles for street-only cars, 50,000 miles for track cars.

Do I need to replace both arms at the same time if only one is bad?

It is not strictly necessary. If you have the funds it would probably be a good idea, since the other arm is likely to be of the same age and not far behind the first in needing replacement. Moreover, replacing either arm required realignment, and so doing both at once can help you avoid a second trip to get the car aligned.

I FOUND THE FOLLOWING TYPE OF RECALL ON 1999, 98, 97, 96 RL AND TL ACURAS. THESE FOLKS OBVIOUSLY HAD A PROBLEM WITH BALL JOINTS !!

Auto Recalls: ACURA - TL - 1998 -- Nolo

Auto Recalls: **ACURA** - TL - 1998 -- Nolo ... Auto Recalls > Vehicles > **ACURA** > TL > 1998 ... 1998
ACURA TL - SUSPENSION:FRONT:CONTROL ARM:LOWER BALL JOINT ...

Auto Recalls: ACURA - RL - 1996 -- Nolo

Auto Recalls: **ACURA** - RL - 1996 -- Nolo ... Auto Recalls > Vehicles > **ACURA** > RL > 1996 ...
1996 **ACURA** RL - SUSPENSION:FRONT:CONTROL ARM:LOWER BALL JOINT ...

Auto Recalls: ACURA - TL - 1997 -- Nolo

Auto Recalls: **ACURA** - TL - 1997 -- Nolo ... Auto Recalls > Vehicles > **ACURA** > TL > 1997 ... 1997
ACURA TL - SUSPENSION:FRONT:CONTROL ARM:LOWER BALL JOINT

Auto Recalls: ACURA - RL - 1998 -- Nolo

Auto Recalls: **ACURA** - RL - 1998 -- Nolo ... Auto Recalls > Vehicles > **ACURA** > RL > 1998 ...
1998 **ACURA** RL - SUSPENSION:FRONT:CONTROL ARM:LOWER BALL JOINT



January 18, 2005

By fax: [REDACTED]

File No. 1867-01-05

Dear [REDACTED]:

We wish to acknowledge receipt of your letter regarding your 1997 Acura RL.

We are sorry to learn of the incident that led to your letter and of the repairs required to your vehicle. According to our records, the repair for the Safety Recall of the Front Lower Ball Joints was performed on your vehicle on October 15, 1999.

As your vehicle is currently operated in the United States, in addition to the vehicle being outside the warranty parameters, Honda Canada is not in a position to assist you with the cost of the repairs.

Thank you [REDACTED], for taking the time to write. We appreciate having been given the opportunity to clarify our position in this regard.

Yours very truly,

ACURA, A Division of
HONDA CANADA INC.

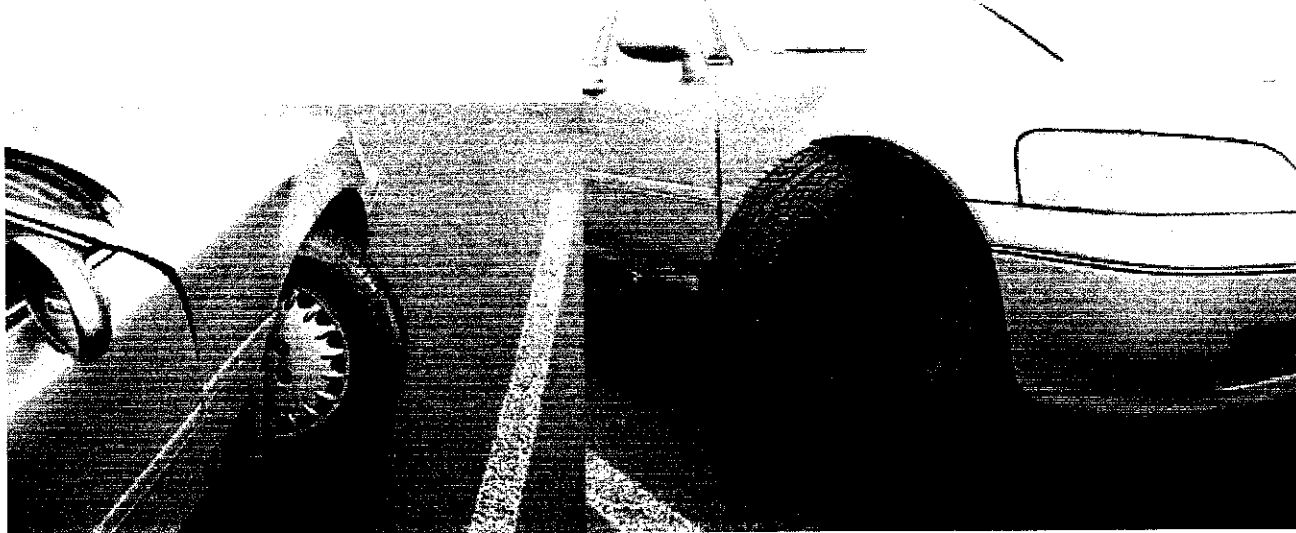
Lia Swindle
Customer Relations Specialist

cc: Service Engineering

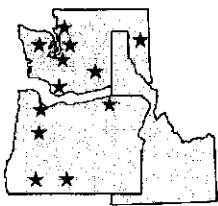
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: <greg@duntonsbodysshop.com>
Sent: Thursday, January 20, 2005 3:03 PM
Subject: 97 acura pictures

Here are the pictures of [REDACTED]'s 97 Acura RL. Thanks



2/6/2005



WASHINGTON-OREGON CLAIM SERVICE

"Claim Administration and Adjustment"



January 28, 2005

[REDACTED]
Mt. Vernon, WA [REDACTED]

RE: Our Principal : Honda of North America
 Loss Date : January 1, 2005
 Our File # : 12615-SE

Dear [REDACTED],

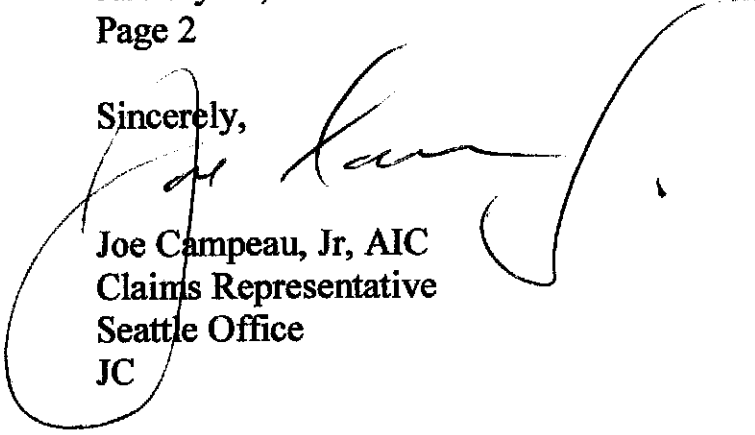
Thanks for speaking with me on the 24th regarding the situation with your 1987 Acura 3.5L RL. Subsequent to our conversation I drove to Alternative Automotive and spoke with the technician. He told me a couple of things that I found interesting. One, he said that when he repaired the upper control arms of your Acura back on December 17th they were in severe need of repair. He found that surprising for a vehicle with only 106,000 miles on it. Two, he said that he had never seen a lower control arm fail in the manner in which yours did. His only explanation for the severe wear on the upper control arms and the failure of the lower arm is that at some time in the past the vehicle was subjected to extreme use (i.e. a prior owner may have lived or routinely traveled over an unfinished road). The extraordinary early wear to the upper control arm joints, coupled with failure of the lower right control arm would seem to support the technician's theory. In any event, I immediately send a report with photos, etc, to Honda of North America and I have their response today. I am advised that the problem with your Acura did not arise out of either a manufacturing or design problem, it appears to be an issue related to use and maintenance of the vehicle, and Honda is therefore unable to assist you with repairs arising from this incident. Purely from a personal perspective, I might offer my opinion that the speed at which vehicles wear out is in direct relationship to how they are used and maintained during the lifetime of the product. Since your car is approaching eight years old and evidently had a couple of prior owners, we have no way of knowing for sure how it was driven or cared for. I'm sorry Honda of North American is unable to help you out with this problem.

[REDACTED]
Mt. Vernon, Washington

January 28, 2005

Page 2

Sincerely,



Joe Campeau, Jr, AIC
Claims Representative
Seattle Office
JC

January 11, 2005

Subject: 1997 Acura 3.5 RL Safety Concern

I have a 1997 Acura 3.5 RL and have always been a very vocal fan of Acuras since I purchased it in 2003. However, I recently had a life-threatening incident for myself and my passenger when the ball joint stud broke in half as I was driving. My car stopped immediately and the front passenger wheel turned instantly at a right angle to the car, damaging the passenger side panel and leaving us stranded in an extremely vulnerable point in the road. There was no warning whatsoever prior to this incident and the mechanic who had worked on it within the last two weeks had seen no indication of such a blatant safety hazard. The emergency personnel involved said that, had I taken the other usual route to my destination, I would most likely have flipped my Acura as I would have been going at a much higher speed.

I now have about \$3000.00 worth of damage to my vehicle in addition to the need to have the ball joint replaced. It is my understanding that there was a recall of the lower ball joint for this particular vehicle. I am very concerned about this issue from the standpoint of the cost and from the standpoint of how this safety flaw could easily have been the death or extreme physical harm of myself and my mother.

In keeping with the upscale reputation of the vehicles you daily promote and sell, I am hoping that you will promptly inform me how I can go about getting the necessary repairs done immediately with Acura's financial assistance. My mechanic is Alternative Automotive's owner, Kerry Learned, and he can be reached at 360-424-2195 in case you need to confirm any of this.

Your responsiveness will be the only consolation for me in this very unfortunate incident. I now own one of your luxury vehicles that is sitting in a mechanic's yard with a front passenger wheel at a 110 degree angle to the front of the vehicle. I am really hoping that I am going to be able to resolve this directly with you and not have to go through the process of putting the picture of my vehicle damage and this story including all parties involved on line and in the hands of people who report publicly on consumer affair issues.

Please let me know by fax what Acura can do to remedy this situation. My Vehicle Identification Number is JH4KA9656VC[REDACTED]. This is evidently a Canadian V.I.N. number but Acura of Canada is saying that they have no responsibility as this car was purchased by me in the United States.

[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).