



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 1388

Date Received: 16-FEB-2005
Repository:

Reference No.
10111590
205 101-53

OWNER INFORMATION (Type or Print)

Name: [Redacted]
Address: [Redacted]
City: LAPEER State: MI Zip Code: [Redacted]

Daytime Telephone Number: [Redacted]
Evening Telephone Number: [Redacted]
E-mail Address: [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: _____ Date: 1/1

VEHICLE INFORMATION

17 digit Vehicle Identification Number Located at bottom of windshield on driver's side: 1G2NES2EXXM [Redacted]
Make: PONTIAC Model: GRAND AM Model Year: 1999
Date Purchased: 12/7/02 Dealer's Name and Telephone Number: _____
Original Owner: Dealer's City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____
Transmission Type: _____ Antilock Brakes Powertrain: _____
 Cruise Control Vehicle Component Code: 141000 AIR BAGS:FRONTAL
Multiple Failure: 1

FAILED COMPONENT(S)/PART(S) INFORMATION

Incident Date(s): 14-NOV-2004
Failure Mileage: 80000 approx
Failure Speed: 3

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: DOTM18B8C036): _____ Original Equipment Prior Repair Failure Location: _____
The 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: 0 Number of Deaths: 0 Reported to Police: N. Police called + did not file report

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 DRIVING 5 MPH OVER A MUD PUDDLE THE FRONT AIR BAG INADVERTENTLY DEPLOYED. VEHICLE WAS STILL DRIVABLE. DEALERSHIP WAS NOTIFIED, BUT DID NOT RESOLVE THE PROBLEM. *AK
Both front airbags deployed

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.

[REDACTED]
Lapeer, MI
[REDACTED]

February 1, 2005

PM Cares Customer Service
P.O. Box 33172
Detroit, MI 48232

To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing this letter to document and bring to light a safety and also a service concern involving an incident with a 1999 Grand Am.

In mid-November 2004 my twenty-three year old son, Joseph Allen, was driving the vehicle in Benton Harbor, MI. While turning around on a poorly marked detour, both airbags deployed. The vehicle was traveling approximately three to four mph; idling, foot on brake. The vehicle went into a puddle as there had been a heavy rainstorm. The drop was estimated to be 3 inches. At this point, both airbags deployed. There were two passengers in the vehicle in addition to my son, the driver. My son called the police, they arrived, but no report was filed because the turn around occurred on railroad property. My son backed the Grand Am out of the puddle with no problem. The police car traveled through the same puddle without incident.

The vehicle was drivable and appeared to have no damage other than the deployed airbags and some minor damage to the cruise control. My son continued to use the vehicle until he was able to drive it back across the state (from Kalamazoo to Lapeer) to return it to me.

When I got the car back I called Robert's Buick in Lapeer, MI and explained the situation. I told them I was concerned that the airbags deployed when they should not have and asked advice on how to proceed. Bill Wolf told me to drive the vehicle in so they could look at it.

This began a process that I thought should be relatively quick and simple, yet it lasted almost two months during which time I was cautioned against driving the vehicle as that might affect the outcome of the claim. I will summarize:

11/24/04

I dropped the Grand Am off at Robert's Buick. They told me about a Grand Prix they had in recently in which both airbags deployed because water had gotten into the sensor module.

11/29/04

I picked up Grand Am (time gap due to Thanksgiving holiday). They told me there was a dent on the engine cradle that could have caused the right bag to deploy and a broken left front strut that could have caused the left bag to deploy. This did not sound plausible to me so I asked if I had any other recourse and was told no. I was given an estimate which I have enclosed.

11/29/04

I called an independent repair shop for an estimate on repair. I explained the situation and was

advised to call the 1-800-PM-CARES line.

11/30/04

I called 1-800-PM CARES. I spoke to Juan Avilla and was given reference # 1-284133016 and a phone number for Joe to call him to relate details. I was told this was a "product allegation," Juan would take the preliminary information, and then another technical rep would follow up. Juan said if he did not hear from Joe he would call by Friday. Juan called Joe the following week, took information, and said he would call back in 24 hours.

12/13/04

It had been about 6 days since the last contact and we had not heard from Juan, so I called him. Juan told me this was not a product allegation after all because there was no accident and it would not be investigated. Because of my concerns about the validity of Robert's Buick report, Juan told me to get a second opinion from another GM dealer. If another dealer reported that the airbags should not have deployed, they would pay to repair the damage. Since I was also concerned about safety, Juan assured me that when the repair was done the cause of deployment would be discovered.

12/15/04

Took car to Merrollis. Service manager, Chad Collick, immediately advised us to "get GM involved" and gave us the 1-800-PM CARES number. We then explained the situation as it had unfolded to this point. He and his mechanics (and Joe and I) looked under the vehicle. They saw the scrape - described as a 1" gash in the Robert's report. It is toward the front right on the engine cradle and about 1" wide, maybe 1/8" deep on deepest part. Joe was sure it didn't happen at the time the airbags deployed. He wasn't sure the frame hit at all, but if it did, it would have hit directly behind the front tires. There were no visible marks in that area. It was the mechanics' opinion that even the visible front scrape should not have caused airbag deployment. They also said there was a broken clock spring on the front driver's side that should have had no effect on the airbags.

12/16/04 8:30am

Joe called 1-800 PM CARES and related info along with reference # to Lee Ann Padgett. He was told to get the road name in Benton Harbor where the incident occurred and also to try to obtain the investigating officer's names from the Benton Harbor Police. This information was never taken or apparently needed. Joe left her the number at Merrollis and Chad Collick's name. Lee Ann promised to call back in 24 hours.

Ms. Padgett called Joe about one week later. She had not even contacted Merrollis. However, she told Joe she had "done research" and determined that the frame must have hit on the sensors. Joe said he was very interested in her research and asked where the sensors were on that vehicle. She had no idea, but suddenly had to take another call. She promised to speak to Merrollis and call back.

Ms. Padgett called Joe after Christmas break and asked for repair estimates.

1/6/05

I called Ms. Padgett and left a message on her voice mail for her to return my call, I had an estimate from Merrollis (enclosed, note discrepancy with Robert's estimate)

1/10/05

Ms. Padgett left message on my voice mail to call her, this would be "taken to the next level"

1/12/05

I called Ms. Padgett and was told that the next level was to speak to the area rep for Robert's. They would not deal with Merrollis because, although they are an authorized GM dealer, they are not Pontiac. I reiterated the history and told her once again about my reservations with Robert's.

1/14/05

I hadn't heard from Ms. Padgett, so I called her. She stated that it usually takes 24 - 48 hours to

hear from the area rep. She expected to hear by Monday, 1/17/05.

1/18/05

I called Ms. Padgett. She had not heard from area rep and would call her manager, Marcia Alajoki, if she did not hear. She told me she had left a message for him this morning.

1/20/05

Ms. Padgett left message for me to call.

1/21/05 10:50am

I returned call and left voice message.

1/21/05 3:30pm

Ms. Padgett called and informed me that the claim was denied and that was the end of the process and the final decision. She noted that I was dissatisfied with the result and method of handling and would inform her manager. If her manager saw a problem she would call me. Expecting that there would be no response, I pressed her for another recourse. She gave me her manager's name, but not phone number. She gave me an address and fax number for this letter.

NOTE:

I was told by both Juan Avilla and Leo Ann Padgett that there was an on board computer in the Grand Am that could tell the speed of the vehicle at the time the airbags deployed. They told me this after they knew how far the vehicle had been driven post incident. Juan told me the airbags should not deploy at speeds under 14 mph. I asked them to please check the computer. When I pressed to have the computer checked, I was told that the memory was not sufficient since the vehicle had been driven after the incident.

The conflicting information in this communication has been overwhelming. The time taken to return calls and "resolve" this complaint was excessive. I am also still concerned with the possible public safety threat involved with airbag deployment without an accident as there has been no investigation and no apparent concern.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. It is my hope that someone at GM will take note of this matter and initiate corrective action.

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).