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February 7, 2005

2005 FEB 24 11:33

EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT

2005 FEB 18 10:17

NATIONAL HIGHWAY  
TRAFFIC SAFETY ADM.

DaimlerChrysler  
P.O. Box 610207  
Port Huron, Mi. 48061-0207

Attn: Reimbursement

We were notified last Wednesday by telephone that we would be re-imbursed \$277.00 for having the ball joints replaced on our Dodge Dakota.

We took the truck in under warranty twice to Lee Dinges Dodge in Lewiston, Id. complaining of the front end shaking when the brakes were applied. Both times they worked on the brakes, once on the disc and once replacing the pads. We still had problems. We paid them to work on the brakes again because we were out of warranty and we still had problems. They advised us we were in the spec's and no problem. We continued driving this truck until it was not only very dangerous but very annoying when the brakes were applied.

We finally took it to G & A Wheel & Frame and they were able to partially solve the problem by replacing the ball joints. As you can see, we drove the truck for another 100 miles, took it back to G & A, they spent 2 more hours trying to determine why the problem was not fixed. They finally replaced the tie rod end. They explained that the ball joints were so bad that it caused wear on the tie rod. They replaced the tie rod for no additional labor and our problem has been solved at last.

How can you determine that you only need to pay \$277.00 for this when the very minimum that we paid for replacement costs is \$489.96 plus all the inconvenience and stress related to finding what the problem was. According to a newspaper article the costs would be between \$750 and \$1200. Seems our costs are way below even the lowest price quoted.

Sincerely,

[Redacted Signature]

Clarkston, WA.

cc/Administrator, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

NAR  
2/28  
3/1/05

**Several problems with front end of Dodge Dakota**  
**Comments:**

Since buying a new Dodge Dakota we have always had problems with the front end. Dinges said it was the brakes and worked on them several times. Today we learned it was bad ball joints which we were told was the problem from the Get Go!! Now we need new ball joints and new brakes to the tune of \$800 or more.

Friday, December 03, 2004 America Online: Sasnwa

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We were also informed that Dakotas, half ton pickups and Durangos have a history of problems with the ball joints and this was documented on a TV news show recently. We would appreciate hearing from you on this matter. Seems to us that since this seems to be a major problem that a recall isn't in order.

**Sender Information:**

Title [REDACTED]  
First Name [REDACTED]  
Middle Initial: [REDACTED]  
Last Name [REDACTED]

# DaimlerChrysler recalls 600,000 Dodge Durango and Dakota trucks

By DEE-ANN DUNN  
OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Bowing to pressure from federal safety regulators, DaimlerChrysler AG said Friday it is recalling 600,000 Dodge Durango SUVs and Dakota pickup trucks because of a defect that can cause their wheels to fall off.

The recall affects four-wheel drive vehicles from the 2000-2003 model years. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration recommended the recall after a 16-month investigation revealed that the vehicles' upper ball joints could fail. If that happens, the suspension can collapse and a wheel can fall off.

DaimlerChrysler also is extending the warranty to 10 years or 100,000 miles on the suspension upper ball joints on an additional 400,000 Durango front-wheel sport utility vehicles and Dakota front-wheel pickups from model years 2000 to 2003. NHTSA didn't request a recall of the front-wheel versions, but DaimlerChrysler wanted to include those customers by extending their warranties, Chrysler Group spokesman Max Gates said.

NHTSA announced a separate recall Friday of 2004 Durangos because a cable can short-circuit and cause a fire under the hood. There are 71,763 vehicles involved in that recall.

On Thursday, after word spread that NHTSA was requesting a recall, DaimlerChrysler acknowledged a problem with the ball joints but didn't believe it warranted a safety recall. DaimlerChrysler says there have been no reported injuries due to the defect that have been substantiated by the company. There also are no injuries due to ball joint failures listed in NHTSA's files.

Gates said owners would hear noises before a ball joint failed.

The automaker will repair vehicles for free starting next month. It costs between \$750 and \$1,200 to replace the ball joint, depending on the dealer and the area, according to a

lawsuit filed against DaimlerChrysler by Durango owner in North Carolina. DaimlerChrysler said it will reimburse owners who already paid for the repair.

When NHTSA opened its investigation in July 2003, there were 28 complaints about upper ball joint failure and five reports of crashes. NHTS spokeswoman Liz Neble couldn't provide update numbers Friday.

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THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION  
ACT (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. 552(b)(6).**