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5/16/05

To: US Dep. of Transportation; National Highway Traffic Safety Administration  
Office of Defect Investigation  
400 7<sup>th</sup> St. SW.  
Washington DC 20590

Subject: 2000 Mercedes Benz SL 500  
Serial number: WDBFA68FXY

2005 MAY 26 AM 11:38

**Summary of issue:** The car required 3 hood liners in less than 5 years.

**Summary of complaint:**

Mercedes Benz considers replacement of hood liners normal wear and tear.  
Mercedes Benz is unwilling to investigate the causes of the problem.  
Mercedes Benz implies that I will have to pay over \$330 every 2-3 years to replace the hood liner as long as I own the vehicle; and considers this normal practice.

**Background:**

- \* I took possession of the car on 2/1/2000. I purchased the extended warranty package.
- \* The 1<sup>st</sup> hood liner became brittle and disintegrated. It was replaced in January 2003 (hood liner lasted less than 3 years).
- \* The newly installed (the second) hood liner also became powdery and literally fell apart less than 2 years after installation; it too had to be replaced with yet a 3<sup>rd</sup> hood liner on 1/26/05.

I called the dealership in Dayton Beach; I called the corporate offices of Mercedes Benz. The answer was always the same, "sorry, but the liner is considered "trim" and as such not covered under the extended warranty"

Kindly refer to the following attachments for more details:

1. Correspondence from me to Mercedes Benz, explaining the problem, asking a few questions and recommending an equitable resolution.
2. Correspondence from Mercedes Benz (MB) in reply to my letter in which they restate their position without answering any of my questions or addressing the issues raised.

**Purposes of this note:**

1. Bring broad public and regulatory awareness and attention to this costly car ownership problem that MB considers "trim" and refuses to address.
2. Investigate the possibility of similar hidden defects resulting in continuing un-necessarily high costs to consumers in this and other MB products.
3. Assist in starting a data base to aid in investigating this and other product or component defects and quality failures in MB products.
4. Pressure MB to address component malfunctions and treat their customers who bring these issues to their attention fairly and equitably..

Respectfully submitted

CC: Mercedes Benz USA, Inc

Edison  
6/1/05

Customer Service  
MB USA  
One Mercedes Drive, P. O. Box 350  
Montvale, NJ 07645-0350

02/02/05

Re: 2000, MB 500 SL VIN WDBFA68FXYP192103

I bought the above car on 2/1/00. I purchase the full extended warrantee package for added peace of mind.

The hood liner became almost totally pulverized and turned to a near dust in less than 3 years. The liner was replaced, under the terms of the warrantee, on 1/13/03, see attached.

Some work was done on the car in January 05, at the Daytona service department. After the work was done, I noticed that 2 large pieces of the hood liner were missing and the liner was, again, very brittle and disintegrated. I noticed this after I brought the car home from the service department. The technician had not mentioned the condition to me or his/her supervisor.

Upon discovering the problem, I contacted the dealership and was told by the service department representative, Tim Aldridge, that the liner was not covered under the extended warrantee. I asked Mr. Aldridge to order the part so that corrective action can be taken as soon as possible. I also spoke the Service Director, Bruce Jones, who restated that the hood liner was not covered by the extended warrantee. He further indicated that the deterioration was fairly common and that he "see quite a bit of it and replaces quite a few of the liners".

I called Dana Wilson at the Dayton dealership and obtained a copy of the extended warrantee agreement. There's no mention of the hood liner as a covered to not-covered item.

I called the MB extended warrantee folks who informed me that the liner "is a trim item" and as such not covered. Once I informed them that it had been replaced only 2 years earlier, I was asked to have Mr. Jones, Daytona Service Director, inspect it to see if there was a problem.

Mr. Jones looked at the liner on 1/26/05 and stated that it looked normal.

The liner was replaced on 1/26/05 to the tune of \$ 332.58, see attached.

I'm enclosing a piece of the liner that was tucked under the hood flanges and a piece of the liner exposed to the engine area.

I have the following concerns regarding the hood liner issue:

1. Is there something fundamentally wrong with engine of my car that is so caustic to the liner that it causes it to deteriorate in 2-3 years?

2. Is there an inherent manufacturing problem with the engine/ engine compartment of the 2000 SL 500 cars?

3. Is this liner material specifically designed for the SL 500? And, is it designed to be replaced every 2-3 years? I.e. am I expected to spend over \$330 every 2-3 years for a new liner?

4. Is there a composition, design or manufacturing defect in the hood liner that causes it to ill perform?

5. Is hood liner deterioration a problem in all SL 500 cars? And at what rate/ frequency do these failures occur?

6. Is hood liner deterioration a problem in all MB cars? And at what rate/ frequency do these failures occur?

I have the following expectation:

In light of the fact that I have never had to replace a hood liner in any of my American, Japanese and German (BMW) cars, some of which I owned for as long as 12 years (the last 7 years in north Florida, at my current address, I expect MB to:

1. provide me with a satisfactory answer to the above questions
2. refund me the full cost of replacing the hood liner on 1/26/05
3. Assure me that either the problem has been solved in the batch hood liners installed on my car in January, '05 or that the company will replace the hood liner at their/ your expense if the liner should need to be replaced again as long as I own the car.

I consider this a serious enough concern, in terms of cost and potential damage to the hood paint and the condition of the engine compartment. I intend to follow this to a satisfactory conclusion. I would appreciate a quick and satisfactory resolution; I do plan to pursue this matter further.

Thanks for your speedy response,

St. Augustine, FL



Mercedes-Benz

Mercedes-Benz USA, LLC

Customer Assistance Center

February 28, 2005

St. Augustine, FL

Subject: Model 2000 SL500  
Serial No. WDBFA68FXYP

Dear

Thank you for your recent letter and telephone call.

We regret to learn of your disappointment with the hood insulation in your SL500 and apologize for any inconvenience you may have experienced.

When we spoke (1/14/05), I confirmed that the hood liner is not a covered component of the Mercedes-Benz Extended Limited Warranty, and that it is considered a wear and tear item. As such, we respectfully decline to reimburse you for the recent replacement.

please be assured that Mercedes-Benz USA will continue to honor its commitment to you under the remainder of the terms of the Mercedes-Benz Extended Limited Warranty (4 years/100,000 miles, whichever comes first), if required and applicable. Should an authorized dealer request, we stand ready to provide technical assistance through our regional staff.

Should you have any outstanding technical issues with your vehicle, we suggest that you speak with the Service Manager at an authorized Mercedes-Benz dealer.

Your patronage of our products means a great deal to us, but we are unable to provide the coverage you seek. We realize this is not the response you anticipated and solicit your understanding and acceptance of our company position.

Sincerely,

Lois Grillo  
Customer Relations Liaison

LG/jla

