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Saturday, June 18, 2005

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RE: Spontaneous fire in 1983 BMW 528e

Dr. Helmut Panke, Chairman of Board Management
BMW AG
Öffentlichkeitsarbeit und Mitarbeiterkommunikation
Werk München
Petuelring 130
D-80788 München Germany

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Dear Dr. Panke:

Yesterday on CNN there was a story about spontaneous fires in autos. Well, that is exactly what happened to me last October. My favorite car was totally destroyed.

I had owned the 528e for 20 + years. It was in excellent condition and had no rust or any mechanical problems, other than one electric window did not work. The engine was perfect and very smooth running. Two years ago, I purchased a "collector's" license plate. The car has always been kept in a garage. It had about 130,000 original miles on it.

Last October, I backed the BMW out of its stall in the underground garage in my condo building. It did not smell right, so I immediately pulled back into the stall. Then a fire broke out under the dash. I tried to put it out but was unsuccessful. I called the fire department and the fireman and police officers arrived shortly after and eventually put the fire out, out building had to be evacuated. People went to the church across the street. The firemen said the gas lines to the building were in the garage so it was very dangerous. To the best of my knowledge, no one was injured fortunately.

Then the fireman manually shoved the car outside. It was totally destroyed. I had no insurance on it other than liability. Then, I had to pay to have it hauled to an auto junk dealer. The firemen could find no cause for the fire.

Since I viewed the program on CNN about defective parts being responsible for spontaneous fires, I felt that I should let you know of this incidence. Further, I think you should consider replacing my car. I can provide documentation for you re the accident, (police and fire reports, towing bills), and the condition of the car, (service records and people who knew the car). Kindly advise if you would like this documentation.

We are fortunate that no permanent harm was done to any person, and that we avoided what could have been a catastrophic situation. Therefore, I would therefore urge you to study the possible effects of any defective parts that might be identified as causal factors. BMW has such exemplary standards of excellence that you may have already done this.

Thank you for your attention. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

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EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT
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Am e-mail 7/12/05

CC. Secretary Norman Y. Mineta
U. S. Department of Transportation

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