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Redmond, WA [REDACTED]

2005 JUL 27 AM 7: 58

July 16, 2005

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Volkswagen of America
Customer CARE
3499 West Hamlin Road
Rochester Hills, MI 48309

Re: VIN: 3VWSA29MXXM [REDACTED]

Dear Volkswagen of America,

I am writing to report a recent, major wiring/electrical failure in my 1999 Volkswagen Jetta and ask for your help in resolving the problem.

On Wednesday, May 25, 2005, I attempted to start my car at my Bellevue, Washington office, and it wouldn't respond. Thinking I probably had a low battery, some co-workers helped me push start my car, so using my clutch I was able to start the engine. On the way home, it seemed to lose power. Given that issue, plus the fact that I needed fuel, I pulled into a Redmond gas station and filled my gas tank. Again, the car would not start. After only two attempts at starting it, all of a sudden, smoke that smelled of burning plastic and rubber began pouring into the cabin of the car from the dash. Soon after, smoke started spewing out from under the hood. Fearing my car was on fire (at a gas station no less), some bystanders grabbed a fire extinguisher and sprayed it under my hood. That seemed to lessen the smoke.

When the smoke finally cleared up and the car cooled down, I called for a towing service and had them take my car to the Redmond Werkshop. The Redmond Werkshop specializes in Volkswagens, and it happens to be located near where the incident occurred. I should note that it was impractical to have the car towed to my dealer - Campbell-Nelson Volkswagen in Edmonds, Washington - because they're located more than 20 miles from the scene. In hindsight, had I known the damage was so extensive and the time to repair it so lengthy, I might have been persuaded to take my car to Campbell-Nelson. Perhaps then I could have availed myself to their loaner car program. In addition, they have a history of performing regularly scheduled maintenance on the vehicle. (I'm sure the Redmond Werkshop, a smaller shop without much extra space for storing vehicles for long periods, wouldn't have minded that either). Having said that, I am fully confident in the Redmond Werkshop's ability to repair my vehicle.

Following is the diagnosis, per the Redmond Werkshop: It appears the starter solenoid shorted out and burnt the main power wires from the starter all the way through the complete main wire harness as well as the engine management and fuel injector harnesses, and melted the ignition switch. The power wires melted all together inside the loom! The safety beam under the dashboard shows smoke damage.

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Given that this occurred at a gas station, I have major concerns about the safety implications of this incident. Were it not for the fire extinguisher being applied, one could argue that it might have led to a serious fire and possibly even a life-threatening explosion. I am most grateful my 19-month old son was not with me at the time.

As you can imagine, this has resulted in what is to be an extremely costly repair. While my vehicle is still covered under a 100,000-mile extended warranty, the cost of the repair will exceed the warranty company's one-time repair liability limit for this occurrence. The balance for the repair – estimated to be approximately \$1,500 thus far – comes out of my pocket. That's not including the car I had to rent for five weeks while my car has been in the shop. I finally turned it in because I can no longer afford it. What is more, one cannot truly place a cost on the inconvenience I have endured of being without a vehicle for the past seven weeks (and counting). The reason for the delay is the wire harnesses that are in need of replacement had to be custom made by Volkswagen in order to move ahead with the repair. The main wire harness took 5 ½ weeks to be made and delivered back to Redmond, from the time it was ordered. Now it turns out that it arrived without the necessary engine management and fuel injection harnesses, creating even further delays and costs.

It probably goes without saying that I am deeply disappointed in Volkswagen for this wiring failure. I have no idea what caused it. I keep my car well maintained and have service records to prove it. I also find it interesting that the Redmond Werkshop has never seen anything like it. Were it not for my extended warranty, this would have been (and perhaps still will/should be) a complete and total loss of my vehicle. As far as I am concerned, that should never happen on a vehicle with less than 80,000 miles. And it should never happen to a Volkswagen, a brand in which I trusted to be safe and reliable.

The safety issues raised by this wiring failure, in particular, have caused me to question my confidence in Volkswagen. Here's why I think this should matter to you. For one, my family is growing, and in about two years I will be in the market for a larger vehicle (i.e. a Passat or Taureg). How can I feel confident enough to remain a Volkswagen customer after this costly and potentially dangerous incident? Furthermore, I have always been a loyal customer and recommended Jettas to anyone in the market for a car in its class. Unless this incident is resolved satisfactorily, I don't see how I can, in good conscience, recommend a Jetta or any Volkswagen again in the future.

Now that the wire harnesses have been custom-made, there's no going back on my decision to repair my car. Having said that, if I had it to do over again, I can't say I would have opted to move ahead with the repair, knowing what I know now. That is, how long it was going to take, how costly it was going to end up being, and at the end of the day, my potential loss of confidence in Volkswagen.

Given that my car is no longer under the manufacturers warranty, I realize Volkswagen of America is under no warranty obligation to assist me with this matter. Nonetheless, I hope that you will do the right thing and help me make this repair and move on. I am asking for your assistance in paying for the difference between what A-1 Warranty Services is contractually obligated to pay and the full balance due to the Redmond Werkshop, plus my towing and car rental fees. A-1 Warranty Services ordinarily would have paid these fees,

were it not for reaching its repair limit. I consider this to be a reasonable request and hope you do, too. Please contact me at your earliest convenience to discuss this matter. Also, please feel free to contact the Redmond Werkshop or A-1 Warranty Services directly.

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]
Redmond Werkshop, contact: Daryl (425) 885-7677
A-1 Warranty Services, contract # AAA-5211716 (888) 353-5754

Sincerely
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Cc: A-1 Warranty Services
Campbell-Nelson Volkswagen
✓ National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
Redmond Werkshop

Attachments: Superior Towing Receipt
Budget Car Rental Receipt
Thrifty Car Rental Receipt

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).