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Granby, CT
June 7, 2005

U.S. Department of Transportation
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
Office of Defects and Investigation
NVS-210 400 7th Street. SW
Washington, DC 20590

OFFICE OF DEFECTS
INVESTIGATION

2005 JUN 13 P 2:25

RECEIVED
NVS-210

To Whom It May Concern:

I want to register a complaint about a part that failed on my 1999 Chrysler Town and Country car that could have easily taken my life and my mother's who was riding with me the day of the failure. I wrote an e-mail letter to Daimler Chrysler Customer Service that I am attaching. The response was cavalier at best and I am outraged at their lack of true concern.

The part that failed is perhaps one of the most important parts on any automobile. The right side steering tie rod dropped to the ground as I was turning around at Scully Motors on April 20, 2005. It's a miracle that it failed at that particular time. I had been on Interstate 91 just minutes before. Our guardian angel must have been with us that day. Please read the e-mail I sent to Daimler for a more comprehensive story.

As you know, most auto manufactures have eliminated the grease fitting that most tie rod ends used to have so there is little inspection of this part when normal service is performed at dealerships. Apparently what happened is that a crack in the rubber grommet occurred that encloses the ball and road- surface water leaked in and corroded the ball and enclosure. After the ball and socket had experienced sufficient reduction, it finally slipped out of the enclosure and dropped to the ground. I am sending the whole tie rod end for your examination.

Initially I thought I should receive repayment for the new replacement parts (both tie rods were replaced). I changed my mind and am only concerned with this problem for other owners of Chrysler Town and Country cars who might experience this condition. My father, who was an automobile mechanic for many years, told me that there is no part more vital for safety than the two tie rods. This is a sealed part that should never fail no matter how many miles are on the car or it should be designated as a potential problem by the Chrysler company and examined during routine service.

Few dealerships and few mechanics ever examine the tie rod ends because they are sealed and require no maintenance. However, a crack in the rubber grommet could occur and internal damage would not be easily evident. With power steering it could occur without noticeable change in the steering function until it actually dropped to the ground.

Heather
2/25/05

Parts received by NVS-210

nmf
8/23/05

You can get collaboration from Scully Motors, Inc. at 147 Poquonock Avenue in Windsor, CT. 06095. The failure occurred in their parking lot on April 20, 2005 and the mechanics had to come out and jack-up the front end to pull the car into the service area. The front wheels were crossed and pointing inward. The Service Manager, Gene and one of the mechanics, Dan Dowd, are witnesses. It sounds like a fairytale with a good ending but this is how it happened.

My hope is that you will inform Chrysler of this potential problem. It would only take a few seconds for a mechanic to see if anything is wrong with the tie rod integrity. My father has already examined his 2003 Chrysler Town and Country. It may be only a fluke, but I am especially upset with Daimler Chrysler for their unconcerned attitude about a steering part flaw that could have snuffed out my life and my mother's. It could have also involved other cars on the highway and led to a disastrous accident.

I would appreciate some kind of response from your department to show that you care.

Sincerely,



cc: Daimler Chrysler Customer Service (Reference # 13480420)

enc. Right side tie rod from 1999 Chrysler Town and Country

E-mail letter to and from Chrysler Customer Service

Scully Motors, Inc. invoice showing replacement of tie rods April 21, 2005

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Subj: Re: DaimlerChrysler Customer Assistance (KMM2680368V1 [REDACTED])
Date: 4/27/2005 12:10:33 P.M. Eastern Standard Time
From: [REDACTED]
To: [REDACTED]

Dear Kim,

Thank you for your recent email to DaimlerChrysler Motors regarding your 1999 Chrysler Town & Country.

Your concerns, particularly in view of the expense and inconvenience involved in this issue, are understandable. However, your request for consideration in this matter must be declined, because the vehicle in question has exceeded the time and mileage limitations of the manufacturer's warranty.

Although a more favorable reply could not be provided, sharing your concern with us is appreciated.

Thank you again for your email.

NOTE: Please do not use the 'Reply' function of your email system. If you have a need to respond to this message, please visit us at our reply form (link provided below). Our system is NOT able to accept any emails at this address.

For any future communications related to this email, please refer to the following information:

REFERENCE NUMBER: [REDACTED]

REPLY LINK: [http://\[REDACTED\]](http://[REDACTED]) ID=KMM2680 [REDACTED]

Sincerely,

Jeff
Senior Staff Representative
DaimlerChrysler Customer Assistance Center

Original Message Follows:

Form Selected:

Category: US Customer Service

Brief Description:

Tie Rod End Fell off

Comments:

My mother and I were in the process of picking up my mother's 2003 Chrysler that was at Scully Motors for routine service (April 20th). I was driving my 1999 Chrysler Town and Country that I had purchased from my parents two years ago. I've been very pleased with it. As I was turning around to leave Scully Motors, after I dropped my Mother off, the tierod on the right side fell to the ground. It was a miracle that it did not happen on Interstate

Wednesday, April 27, 2005 America Online: HaleBuzz

91 which I had been on only minutes before at a speed of 85 mph. The Scully mechanics had to jack up the car and pull it by hand into the service shop. Fortunately Scully was able to replace both tierods within one day. My father, who was an automobile mechanic for many years, said this should never happen on any modern-day vehicle. They are sealed units and require no service. Since there are no grease fittings on these tierods, no one ever inspects them during routine service. There was no indication of a problem of this magnitude. I was trying to think if I had done something earlier that day that could have caused this failed tierod. I did hit a small pothole as I crossed a railroad track going into Suffield and I also heard a slight "click" when I backed out of a parking place at a mall but there was nothing significant that could put my finger on. There was no play or difference in the handling of the car. I have had Chrysler and Plymouth cars for the last 15 years and now I'm scared to death that this is a flawed part that could happen again on my car or my parent's car. I had to pay \$334.80 to get both tierod ends replaced and this seems unfair in view of the failed part. Looking at the failed tierod, it appears that the rubber seal may have cracked open and allowed water into the area of the ball and caused corrosion that may have reduced the diameter of the ball. It was absolutely dry and showed no lubricant at all. I have kept the tierod and will send it to you in hopes that you can discover what happened and alert Chrysler customers or Dealerships of this potentially "deadly" condition. My Mom and I are still shaking. Our guardian Angel must have been with us that day. You can call Scully Motors and get their confirmation of this event. I would appreciate a quick reply.

Thank
you [REDACTED]

Sender Information:

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

THE ATTACHMENTS TO THIS
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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).