

8/18/2005

10134543

Director
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA)
Vehicle Safety Incident Reports
400 Seventh Street NW
Washington, DC
20590

AUG 24 AM 5:09

Accident Report: 2001 Chevrolet Venture - 1GNDX03E9 [REDACTED]

Dear Sir:

On Saturday July 23, 2005 we were driving north on I-5 in Federal Way, WA in our Chevrolet Venture Mini-Van when the hood on the car flew up smashing the front window and severely blocking my view of the road. I was in the right hand lane and was able to come slowly to a stop on the shoulder. I put the hood down and carefully proceeded back home where we changed cars and resumed our trip.

It was a terrifying experience!

If it had happened in a middle lane of I-5 it would probably have resulted in a major accident including injuries or deaths.

It was late in the afternoon and visibility was good. I was going less than 55 mph watching for an opening to move into the faster lanes. This section of I-5 has noticeable "washboarding" in the pavement resulting in a slightly bumpy ride.

On Monday I drove the car to Bruce Titus Chevrolet in Tacoma where we had the bought the car about 6 weeks earlier. I spoke to the General Manager, Gary Michael, as to what possibly could have caused this incident. He said:

"He had never seen this happen before. The Venture's hood release is directly over the emergency parking brake and it is *easy to pull by mistake*. They use a similar vehicle in the shop and his people frequently make this mistake. Wind or vibration probably released the secondary latch."

We both tried to get the secondary latch to release by shaking the hood, etc. but could not get it to release. I asked him to please contact Chevrolet to see if this was a problem with these vehicles - but he refused.

The hood release in the Venture is right above the foot activated emergency brake and is not prominently marked. In other cars I have owned the hood release is *not* easily mistaken for the emergency brake release. I notice that the Chevrolet Suburban, for instance, has the release near the floor where it cannot be easily reached from the driver's seat. I have now put red tape over the hood release in our Venture so it cannot be pulled inadvertently.

When the hood release on our Venture is pulled the front of the hood sticks up about a 1/2 inch. On other cars we have owned this condition could be seen from the driver's seat. The hood on the Venture is steeply sloped and the driver can only see the back edge of the hood (or less) from inside the vehicle. There is no way the driver can tell if the hood release has been pulled except to get out of the car and inspect the front end. After our accident, and when I had pulled to the side of the road, I checked the hood release, - but it is spring loaded so there is no way to tell if it has been pulled or not.

*M. Michael
8/25/05*

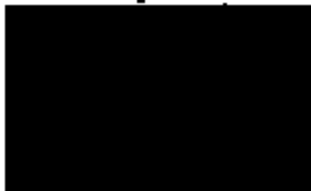
I suggest on all cars that:

- Standards for the secondary latch be such that it will "hold" while the car is driven in conditions encountered on public roads in the US, particularly high speed roads.
- The driver of a vehicle, from the driving position, can tell if the primary hood latch has been released, either by observing the hood directly or, preferably, by an alarm or message. (The Venture has digital displays that alert the driver to doors being open, etc. including if the oil should be changed.)

I do not know why the hood opened the way it did. It is possible that the hood release had been pulled, but maybe not. As mentioned above it is impossible to ascertain its condition from inside the vehicle. We were accustomed to driving a Dodge Caravan which has the same type of foot activated, emergency brake release. The hood had not been opened for about 2 weeks. I am sure that both the primary and secondary hood latches were not unlatched when we started our trip. We had stopped to pickup guests during the trip and I had walked around the car at that time. Nothing looked out of place, although I was not observing the hood particularly. We had been driving about 25 minutes when the incident happened.

Please look carefully into this very dangerous situation.

Sincerely



Tacoma, WA



Copy to:

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