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SUBJ: Multiple Rear Differential Failures before 70K miles "not unusual"

RE: 1999 Jeep Wrangler 1J4FY1 [REDACTED] DaimlerChrysler reference number 14271899

The drive train on my 1999 Jeep Wrangler has failed for the second time at 69,000 miles after only 11,000 miles since being rebuilt with DaimlerChrysler's own "Mopar" parts and DaimlerChrysler has said: "[We] won't help you." They want more than two-thousand dollars to repair it. Again.

I was initially hesitant to purchase a new Jeep Wrangler in the spring of 1999 after learning that Jeep is a product of the DaimlerChrysler Corporation. For as far back as I can remember, I had read, heard by word of mouth, and seen that The Chrysler Corporation was seemingly synonymous with reliability problems. It seems that whenever I see a vehicle broken down on the highway, it is almost always a Chrysler vehicle. Everyone I have ever known with one had problems with them. However in 1999, I had found online that Chrysler had acknowledged reliability issues in the past, and by their own admission, were working to address them and their self assessment was that reliability had improved and they had changed. I wanted to believe that they really had improved, and I liked the Jeep Wrangler. I ignored everything I was reading about problems online. However, because I still had some lingering quality and reliability concerns when I purchased the vehicle, I purchased an extended warranty. I would later find that Chrysler's claims of better reliability were just another in a string of renewed reliability claims in years past. I would find what I consider to be an alarming number of DaimlerChrysler owner complaints online. A simple search of "DaimlerChrysler Vehicle Problems" brings up more than 635,000 hits. There are even numerous websites dedicated to owners who have had serious problems with their vehicles built by DaimlerChrysler.

I special ordered and purchased my 1999 Jeep Wrangler Sport VIN: 1J4FY1 [REDACTED] new from the factory in June 1999.

This vehicle has been used primarily for highway use, has never been off-road once, has never been used for towing, has never been driven in the snow, and literally has never even been driven in the rain. I am usually the only one in it, and I am definitely the only one who drives it. It is only used during nice weather. It has had preventive maintenance done above and beyond the requirements in the owner's manual, and received drive train fluid changes at Chrysler dealerships, even though the vehicle was never used in any of the conditions that required it. Preventive maintenance has been followed to the letter as required by Jeep/DaimlerChrysler (and only at authorized Jeep dealerships) and I have all receipts.

I have easily had more problems with this vehicle in six years than I have had with other (non DaimlerChrysler) vehicles I own that I have owned as long as fifteen years, having more than double this vehicle's mileage. Everything from water leaks, to drivetrain seals falling, electrical, multiple ABS, airbag and seatbelt problems, to even the paint just "falling off" are issues on this vehicle. Even non-mechanical things like the tire pressures listed on the vehicle placard and in the owners manual are inconsistent. However this letter is concerning one particular issue.

This vehicle began to exhibit a very subtle grating / occasional clunk noise at highway speed when it was about three years old at approximately the 45,000 mile mark. A service visit revealed the dealership "could not duplicate" the problem. At 58,130 miles on November 13, 2003, I again brought this concern to Clair Jeep. This time I was told the entire rear differential (as well as the front differential of which they had also found a problem) needed a full rebuild. This work was very costly, but was covered by the extended warranty I had purchased. I had to pay a deductible for this work.

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I was shocked that a four year old vehicle would require major repairs such as these when I have owned numerous other vehicles that have not ever needed this level of repair even after more than fifteen years (I take care of my cars and they have lasted a long time). With this vehicle being only four years old, I questioned the service advisor (A.Z.) as to why a four year old vehicle with 58,000 miles would have a major drive train failure. He stated: **"Jeep drive trains are delicate. This type of job is not unusual."**

So on November 13, 2003 at 58,130 miles, the front and rear differentials of my 1999 Jeep Wrangler were rebuilt by Clair Jeep in West Roxbury, MA. (See encl.)

Over the next few thousand miles, the noise very subtly returned. However, because it was not as loud, I did not bring the vehicle in to question it. When the noise was at a similar level before, the service department "could not duplicate". Also, because the noise only happens on extended trips at highway speeds, it was not always apparent on every trip. The noise gradually became louder to the level it was at before. I thought even though the differentials had failed and been rebuilt after only 58,000 miles, they could not possibly be failing again after less than 11,000 miles. I was wrong. DaimlerChrysler's parts had failed a second time.

At 69,500 miles and exactly two years to the day later, the very same "Five Star" dealership (Clair Jeep, West Roxbury, MA) told me that the rear differential had failed again. Because the vehicle is only driven in good weather, it has been two years; however it has only been just over 11,000 miles. **At six years old and 69,500 miles, this vehicle is on its second identical major drive train failure.** It is important to note, that this problem is not sudden; but gradually is introduced as a subtle grating noise, only at highway speed, and only after the vehicle is driven several miles. The drivetrain did not wear out overnight, it had to have started failing again almost right after it was rebuilt.

The dealership has estimated a cost of over two-thousand dollars to repair this vehicle again. They stated that they guarantee their work for only one year or 12,000 miles. I stated that I do not agree that I should have to pay for this. I again asked if it was normal for a six year old vehicle with 11,000 miles since its last major drive train overhaul to need another major repair on exactly the same component. I was told by the service manager at Clair Jeep: **"bearings wear out"**. My immediate thought was that maybe it is normal for DaimlerChrysler's parts to wear out after 11,000 miles of use, but I have never seen or heard of this happening with any other brand of automobile. For that matter, I can't think of ever hearing of a vehicle needing a differential overhaul before 60,000 miles, much less twice before 70,000 miles. This holds even more true for a vehicle that is marketed as "rugged". I wondered why the "delicate" drive train of the Jeep Wrangler is not mentioned in DaimlerChrysler's commercials showing the vehicle ascending rocks and blasting through snow or rivers. I just want to take it on the highway to get to work and it can't even meet that demand. **So by all dealer accounts, two major drivetrain failures on DaimlerChrysler's Jeep Wrangler before 70,000 miles is absolutely normal.**

For this reason, I immediately contacted DaimlerChrysler directly and was assigned a reference number of 14271899. I explained that my vehicle was still at the dealership and that the repairs should be made in full at no cost to me. I was told I would be called back and given the status of my case. I was not called back. I had to call back the next day and was told that "a decision" had been made by Daimler Chrysler's representative. The caller on the line with me stated bluntly: **"No, Chrysler is not going to help you."**

Some DaimlerChrysler dealerships have a "Five Star" certification meaning they have obtained this elite status by having a high rate of customer satisfaction (to my knowledge). It is important to note that as a customer of DaimlerChrysler for the past six years, I have not one time been solicited regarding my service experience at any "Five Star" dealership I have been to. With a job costing over \$2000 in parts and labor that failed within 11,000 miles you can imagine I would have formed quite an opinion. Perhaps when you ask the right people, you get the right responses.

I have been treated badly by DaimlerChrysler. I now own a vehicle I took very good care of, struggled for five years to pay off, that I can't use, because it again needs thousands of dollars of work to fix. One major repair like this is bad enough, but this is twice and Chrysler's parts have failed again. I have plenty of other things I would rather be doing instead of using my time sending letters to get DaimlerChrysler to take responsibility for their failed parts. This could have been resolved by my calling Chrysler's 800 number, but instead **DaimlerChrysler left me holding the bag for their failure.**

I fully expect DaimlerChrysler to cover complete repair (parts and labor) of my vehicle in full. I will send out a subsequent mailing shortly letting you know DaimlerChrysler's response (if any), and if necessary will continue sending subsequent updates to keep everyone in the loop until DaimlerChrysler takes responsibility for the faulty parts twice installed in my vehicle.

Feel free to email me directly at [REDACTED] with any questions or if I can provide additional information. Also, feel free to reproduce any part of this letter as you require.

I hope to contact you all soon with resolution to this matter. I will keep you posted regularly until it is resolved by DaimlerChrysler.

Signed, [REDACTED]

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