



U.S. Department of Transportation
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

DOT Auto Safety Hotline
Vehicle Owner's Questionnaire
To Report Vehicle Safety Defects
1-888-DASH-2-DOT
(1-888-327-4236)
INTERNET:www.nhtsa.dot.gov/hotline

FOR AGENCY USE ONLY 100148

Date Received 25-JUL-2006
Repository
Reference No. 10163383

OWNER INFORMATION (Type or Print)

Name [REDACTED] Daytime Telephone Number [REDACTED] E-mail Address [REDACTED]
Address [REDACTED]
City NEWCASTLE State CA Zip Code [REDACTED] Evening Telephone Number [REDACTED]

Do you authorize NHTSA to provide a copy of this report to the manufacturer of your vehicle? YES NO
In the absence of an authorization, NHTSA WILL NOT provide your name or address to the vehicle manufacturer.
Signature of Owner _____ Date ____/____/____

VEHICLE INFORMATION

17 digit Vehicle Identification Number Located at bottom of windshield on driver's side 1B7MF36C [REDACTED]
Make DODGE Model RAM 3500 Model Year 1994
Date Purchased 15-MAY-06 Dealer's Name and Telephone Number [REDACTED] Engine: No: Cylinders 6 Fuel Type: Diesel
Original Owner Dealer's City [REDACTED] State [REDACTED] Zip Code [REDACTED]
Transmission Type MANUAL Antilock Brakes Cruise Control Powertrain 4 WHEEL DRIVE Vehicle Component Code 021000 SUSPENSION:FRONT
Multiple Failure: 1

FAILED COMPONENT(S)/PART(S) INFORMATION

Incident Date(s) 15-MAY-2006 Failure Mileage 95000 Failure Speed 50
APR

ADDITIONAL ITEMS TO BE COMPLETED WHEN REPORTING A TIRE FAILURE

Tire Make [REDACTED] Tire Model (Name or Number) [REDACTED] Tire Size (Example P215/65R15) [REDACTED]
DOT No. (Example: DOTM19ABC036) Original Equipment Prior Repair Failure Location: [REDACTED]
Tire Component Code [REDACTED] Tire Failure Type [REDACTED]

ADDITIONAL ITEMS TO BE COMPLETED WHEN REPORTING A CHILD SEAT FAILURE

Make: [REDACTED] Date Manufactured: [REDACTED] Model No./Name: [REDACTED]
Seat Type: [REDACTED] Installation System: [REDACTED]
Child Seat Component Code: [REDACTED] Failed Part: [REDACTED]

APPLICABLE INCIDENT INFORMATION

(Please describe in detail the incident(s), Failure(s), Crash(es), and injury(ies).)

Crash Yes No Fire Yes No Number of Persons Injured [REDACTED] Number of Deaths [REDACTED] Reported to Police N

Narrative Description of Incident(S), Crash(es), and Injury(ies).
Please describe (1) events leading up to the failure, (2) failure and its consequences, and (3) what was done to correct the failure; i.e, parts repaired or replaced (and if old part is available).

DT*: THE CONTACT STATED THAT WHILE DRIVING AT 50 MPH, THE VEHICLE HIT A BUMP, WHICH STARTED A VIOLENT SHAKING OR "DEATH WOBBLE" IN THE FRONT OF THE VEHICLE. THE VEHICLE WAS TAKEN TO A SERVICE DEALER, WHERE THE DEALER REINFORCED THE SHOCK TOWER, AND DETERMINED THAT THE TRACK BAR WAS LOOSE. THERE IS A NHTSA RECALL # 94V097000 WHICH PERTAINS TO THE FRONT SUSPENSION. THE VEHICLE WAS NOT INCLUDED IN THE RECALL DUE TO THE VIN.

See a attached letter

Include, if available: Police/Fire Department Report, Photos, and Repair Invoice. ATTACH ADDITIONAL SHEETS IF NECESSARY

The Privacy Act of 1974-Public Law 93-579 This information is requested pursuant to authority vested in the National Highway Traffic Safety Act and subsequent amendments. You are under no obligation to respond this questionnaire. Your response may be used to assist the NHTSA in determining whether a Manufacturer should take appropriate action to correct a safety defect. If the NHTSA proceeds with administrative enforcement or litigation against a manufacturer, your response, or a statistical summary thereof, may be used in support of the agency's action.

From:

[REDACTED]
Newcastle, CA [REDACTED]

Aug 8, 2006

To: NHTSA

Investigation Reference #: 10163383

Subject:

Supplemental information about 1994 Dodge 3500 4X4 Truck safety defect / recall

To whom it concerns:

On the investigation form your agent helped me initially submit, please change the Date Purchased from 15 May 2006 to Jan 17, 2006, and the Incident date from 15 May 2006 to 15 April 2006. I'm sorry for the mistakes, when phoning in and making my initial complaint/request, I had to quote these dates from memory. I've since looked up the exact information.

I have been told by Chrysler (several times, on 15 July 2006 and thereafter) that my truck (I am the third owner) does not have any open recalls, yet two recall notices I have found on the internet and by discussing with a local Dodge dealer are exactly related to what I believe is a design flaw in my truck wherein as the investigation indicates, when driving at approx. 50MPH and you hit a bump, the vehicle shakes VIOLENTLY – this has happened to me several times in the few months I have owned this vehicle. The symptom is known informally as “the death wobble”.

I've contacted Dodge and they have indicated there are no open recalls and they can't help me to overcome this problem. I believe is a serious safety defect, I think Dodge should repair the weak design before I and/or an innocent bystander or passenger is injured.

Note the two NHTSA CAMPAIGN ID Numbers I believe apply:

94V097000 (reported to the safety hotline and in my request)

94V202000 (an additional recall for the same problem)

The first NHTSA campaign ID correlates to Chrysler recall #618 and the description exactly matches my truck (an “S” in the 11'th position of the VIN – and vehicle was built on 12/93). Chrysler service tells me this does not apply but they do not indicate why. The second correlates to Chrysler #629 and is an extensive modification adding a strengthening strut to the mounting bracket for the track bar. There are TSB's that I have found I will not include as they are not “recalls” but that have to do with front-end “shaking”. All of the recall notices and TSB's as well as extensive research on my own indicts this as a Chrysler design flaw and a safety issue.

In the previous model year (1993) the track bar was much heavier – the 93 used a Heim joint on each end of the track bar, but the 1994 model year changed from a heim joint on the end that attaches to the frame to a very small (5/8”) tapered ball-joint. It is this ball-joint that is failing frequently.

After the first "death wobble" experience on 4/15/06 I was nearly ejected from the vehicle. Because I perform maintenance on my own vehicles (except for problems I feel are defective or a design/safety flaw), I then researched the problem and was told by local (non-Chrysler) alignment shops to look at the track bar. I then proceeded myself to follow the TSB 02-06-96 which describes how to test the track bar for wear. Mine was over the limit of wear of 0.080", so I purchased one from Riebes in Auburn, Calif (\$187.37 incl. Tax) on 4/29/06 and installed it 4/30/06. This appeared to have addressed the problem for a short time, when the issue reappeared and I subsequently took it to Chrysler asking them to fix whatever safety recalls might be related to the oscillation, this being on July 12 2006. At that time, I told Chrysler I'd pay the diagnostic fee if they could tell me what was causing the Death Wobble if in fact the recalls they performed were not the issue. I was told I needed quite a bit of work on the front-end suspension, but they never at that time told me there was a recall notice related to shaking that was specific to BR3500 late-1995-manufactured 4X4 trucks; instead, they quoted me some \$4500 to have the vehicle repaired but they said they did not know if the repairs would fix the wobble/vibration. This amazed me since I am certain from what I've seen in my own research that there are a number of Dodge trucks with this "death wobble" problem! I had no confidence that Chrysler's \$4500 repairs would address the actual problem so I declined repairs.

In any case, after I realized Dodge would charge me over half of what I paid for the truck with no promise it would resolve the issues, I again measured the first track bar I replaced and noticed it also had excessive play on the ball-joint end just as the first track bar had some short time before. I am certain this is a design oversight as this ball-joint is extremely tiny compared to the previous model-year, and as well third-party companies produce track bar replacement kits to address this design flaw (one is DT engineering - 929-776-4129). Why should I have to purchase a heavy-duty track bar system to fix a safety recall / design flaw? There are other companies making upgrades to address this problem, but DT engineering is the most highly regarded. The DT product can be seen here: <http://www.dtprofab.com/dodge.htm>. By the way, my truck suspension is NOT modified (eg truck is not "lifted") - it is a stock suspension.

I've attached two receipts: one for the first track bar I bought on 4/29/06 and the second for an exchange for a new track bar on 7/29/06 which Riebes performed. After this second track bar replacement, the "death wobble" has not occurred, however, I fear the inadequately-designed trackbar will again fail, perhaps this time out of the 90-day warranty period, and I will be faced with either an accident and personal injury, or the need to purchase a DT track bar or otherwise for expert mechanics to fix the problem.

Why doesn't Chrysler want to acknowledge this design flaw and why do they say these two recall notices which by the way were never performed (as I can tell by inspection it is unmodified) are not specific to my VIN/model? I am certain Chrysler thinks there are not sufficient customers owning unmodified problematic vehicles to warrant the effort, or there may not be any class-action lawsuit against Chrysler pending on this older vehicle.

Thank you for your time!



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).