



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 11-OCT-2007
Repository
Reference No. 10205407

OWNER INFORMATION (Type or Print)

Name [REDACTED]
Address [REDACTED]
City MEDFORD State NJ Zip Code [REDACTED]
Daytime Telephone Number [REDACTED] E-mail Address [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 a signature, NOT provide your name or address to the vehicle manufacturer.
Signature of Owner [REDACTED] Date 11/19/07

VEHICLE INFORMATION

17 digit Vehicle Identification Number Located at bottom of windshield on driver's side: WWWVH63B [REDACTED]
Make VOLKSWAGEN Model PASSAT Model Year 2002
Date Purchased 14-DEC-05 Dealer's Name and Telephone Number [REDACTED] Engine: No: Cylinders 6 Fuel Type: Gas
Original Owner Dealer's City [REDACTED] State [REDACTED] Zip Code [REDACTED]
Transmission Type AUTOMATIC Antilock Brakes Cruise Control Powertrain FRONT WHEEL DRIVE
Vehicle Component Code 116000 ELECTRICAL SYSTEM:IGNITION
Multiple Failure: 1

FAILED COMPONENT(S)/PART(S) INFORMATION

Incident Date(s) 08-MAY-2007 Failure Mileage 91000 Failure Speed 0

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 0 Number of Deaths 0 Reported to Police Y

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).

TL*THE CONTACT OWNS A 2002 VOLKSWAGEN PASSAT. THE CONTACT STATED THAT HIS VEHICLE CAUGHT FIRE WITH FLAMES RISING APPROXIMATELY THREE FEET ABOVE THE HOOD. THE FIRE AND POLICE DEPARTMENTS ARRIVED AT THE SCENE. A POLICE REPORT WAS FILED. THE FIRE WAS EXTINGUISHED, HOWEVER, THE VEHICLE WAS DESTROYED. THE CONTACT HAS NOT SPOKEN WITH THE DEALER. THE CURRENT AND FAILURE MILEAGES WERE 91,000.
THE FIRE OCCURRED AT ABOUT 5AM, THE CAR HAVING NOT BEEN DRIVEN FOR 7 HOURS, THE PREVIOUS DAY, IT WAS DRIVEN ABOUT 10 MILES.

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 to 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.

[REDACTED]
Medford, NJ [REDACTED]

November 21, 2007

Gentlemen:

I enclose the following regarding my auto fire which occurred last May:

- a. Your Vehicle Owner Questionnaire
- b. The Ocean County Sheriff's Dept. Fire Investigation Report
- c. A report entitled "Hard Facts" prepared by a consultant hired by the insurance company. The author's conclusion that the fire was caused by an improper repair of damage caused by hitting a deer may be in error considering your investigation.
- d. A photo taken after the fire.

Please feel free to contact me should you want additional information.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]
Phone: [REDACTED]



Ocean County Sherriff's Dept. Office of the Fire Marshal
P.O. Box 2191, Toms River, NJ 08754-2191
Phone: 732-341-3451/1-800-331-8152 Fax: 732-341-3154
Fire Investigation Report (Privileged and Confidential)

Case 07081

Fire Date 5/10/2007 **Fire Day** Thursday **Fire Time** 4:51
Weather Type Foggy **Temperature** Warm- 61 to 79 degrees
Wind Direction N/A **Wind Speed** **Casualty** 0 **Fatality** 0
Fire Address [REDACTED] Island Heights Borough, NJ
Property Type Mobile-Vehicle **Incident Type** Fire
Suspicious No
Fire Cause Accidental
Entry Prior To FD Arrival None
Point Of Origin Under area of front/driver's side wheel well
Smoke Detectors Present No **Detectors Operational** No
Forced Entry No **Forced Entry Location** None
Building Type

Witness

Name [REDACTED] **SSN** N/A
Address [REDACTED] Island Heights, NJ, [REDACTED]
Address 2 N/A

Reported Alarm

Name [REDACTED] **SSN** N/A
Address [REDACTED] Island Heights, NJ, [REDACTED]
Address 2 N/A

Owner

Name [REDACTED] **SSN** N/A
Address [REDACTED] Island Heights, NJ, [REDACTED]
Address 2 N/A



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Fire Officer In Charge

Name Doug Camburn, Chief (5300) SSN N/A

Address N/A, N/A, ,

Address 2 N/A

Evidence Collected No **Evidence Collected By**

Reported Alarm [REDACTED]

Photographing Agency Ocean County Office of the Fire Marshal

Responding Fire Dept. Island Heights Fire Company # 1

Fire Officer in Charge Doug Camburn, Chief (5300)

Fire Synopsis

On Thursday, May 10, 2007 at 4:51 A.M., Station 53 was dispatched to respond to a fully engulfed car fire, at [REDACTED] Island Heights, New Jersey.

Upon arrival of Chief Doug Camburn (5300), he encountered a Volkswagen Passatt Station Wagon fully engulfed in flames. At that time, Engine 5301 arrived on location and stretched a 1¾" pre-connect to the fire. After that, Engine 5311 arrived on location and stretched a 1¾" pre-connect, as well. That crew then applied foam to the vehicle to help Engine 5301's crew on extinguishing the fire. After that, Chief Camburn requested the Ocean County Fire Marshal's Office to respond for an origin and cause investigation.

Investigator/Agencies Involved

Joseph M. Paolo/Deputy Fire Marshal /Ocean County Office of the Fire Marshal

John P. Pasola/Deputy Fire Marshal/Ocean County Office of the Fire Marshal



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Case 07081

Scene Examination

On Thursday, May 10, 2007 at 5:03 A.M., our office was dispatched to respond to 111A Sassafras Lane, Island Heights, New Jersey for a fire investigation.

Upon arrival at approximately 5:30 A.M., I met with Chief Doug Camburn (5300) and Patrolman Paul Rutledge (Badge # 256), who had advised me of the situation. After that at 5:43 A.M., Deputy Fire Marshal Joseph M. Paolo arrived on location and was briefed on the situation. Deputy Fire Marshal Paolo then photographed the entire fire scene. This area consisted of a 2002 (four-door) Volkswagen Passatt Station Wagon, which had a hatch on the rear, with an attached (rear) license plate [REDACTED] and a front plate that was on the bottom of the burnt debris, by the motor. The Vin # (WVWVH63B42E [REDACTED]) was obtained thru the Island Heights Police Department. As Deputy Fire Marshal Paolo photographed that area, I spoke with the vehicle owner (See Witness Statement). After that, we looked at the engine compartment, noting this section of the vehicle to be the area of heaviest burn. Next, we began to look at the front aluminum radiator, which showed fire, coming from the lower wheel well on the front/driver's side (engine compartment area). Next, we looked in that area, observing numerous wires that had a "cherry red" color, along with some beading to the ends. All of these wires were very brittle to touch. We also observed a heavy oxidation pattern to the inside of the front/driver's side fender (engine compartment), wheel well and top of hood. We then began to examine the front/driver's side tire, which was completely consumed on the top and the sides. The bottom of the tire was still intact, because the two front tires blew from the fire and the front of the vehicle dropped to the ground. After that, we looked at the aluminum rim of that tire, which showed signs of fire, coming from the front area of the driver's side (engine compartment). All units in that area were completely destroyed by fire.

At this time, the investigation was concluded, with the fire being ruled as Accidental. The area of origin was in the front engine compartment (driver's side).

Scene Exam. Submitted By John P. Pasola
John P. Pasola/Deputy Fire Marshal

Date 5/23/07

Scene Exam. Reviewed By Daniel P. Mulligan
Fire Marshal Daniel P. Mulligan

Date 6/14/07

OCSD Office of the Fire Marshal
Ocean County, New Jersey



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Witness Statement

This statement was taken from [REDACTED]
 by John P. Pasola/Deputy Fire Marshal
 at the fire scene.

Witness [REDACTED]

DOB N/A

SS# N/A

Home Phone # [REDACTED]

Work Phone # N/A

Statement

[REDACTED] stated that the car had been parked since 6:00pm the previous night. He also stated that it had not been ran since that time. Next, [REDACTED] stated that he heard two loud explosions that awakened him. He then went to the exterior of his house and found his car fully engulfed with flames. He then called 9-1-1. There was an electrical problem with the dome light (front door), which was repaired 5,000 miles ago. The vehicle had approximately 91,000 miles. The doors were unlocked and there was approximately a half of tank of gas. He hit a deer a few moths ago and the driver's side was repaired by an auto body shop.

Submitted By John P. Pasola
 John P. Pasola/Deputy Fire Marshal

Date 6/14/07

Reviewed By Daniel P. Mulligan
 Fire Marshal Daniel P. Mulligan
 OCSD Office of the Fire Marshal
 Ocean County, New Jersey

Date 6/15/07



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Fire Officer In-Charge Statement

Fire Officer Doug Camburn, Chief (5300)

Statement N/A

Submitted By John P. Pasola
John P. Pasola / Deputy Fire Marshal

Date 5/23/07

Reviewed By Daniel P. Mulligan
Fire Marshal Daniel P. Mulligan

Date 6/14/07

OCSD Office of the Fire Marshal
Ocean County, New Jersey

HARD FACTS™

46 Georgia Road, Freehold, NJ 07728 (732) 462-2674
FAX (732) 409-6595 e-mail: hfacts@AOL.com

May 22, 2007

Andy Lindenmuth
USAA Insurance Company
P.O. Box 490
Langhorne, Pennsylvania 19047

Re:

Claim

D/L: May 10, 2007

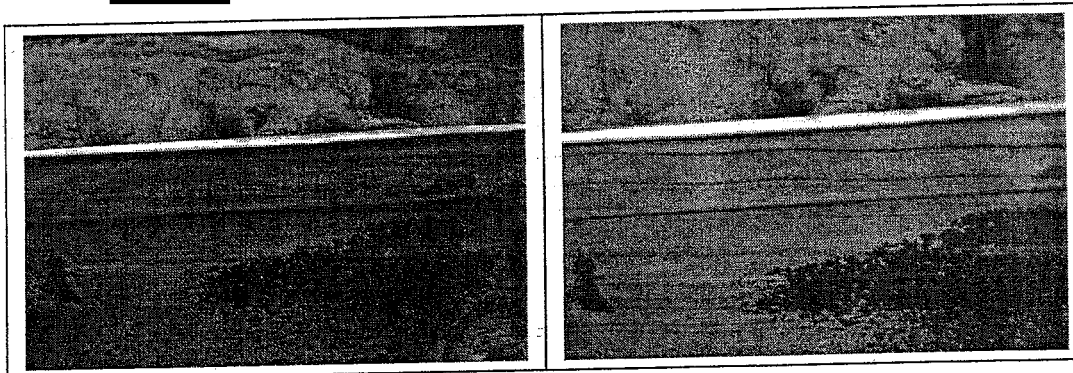
Dear Mr. Lindenmuth:

In accordance with your request, this organization conducted a forensic automotive engineering examination that focused upon the recovered remains of the [REDACTED] vehicle on May 18, 2007. The subject vehicle was examined at Insurance Auto Auctions in Morganville, New Jersey where it was staged under stock number 3105780.

It is our understanding that the assignment is to determine, within reasonable engineering and scientific certainty, the origin of cause of the vehicular fire occurrence. To that end, the results and findings of our thorough field examination follows.

DESCRIPTION OF VEHICLE

The subject vehicle is a 2002 Volkswagen Passat GLS manufactured by Volkswagen AG in Emden, Germany. During assembly, this vehicle was assigned unique public vehicle identification number WVVH63B42E [REDACTED]. Computer scrutiny of this number relative to check digit "4" and sequence number [REDACTED] confirmed the vehicle's identity.

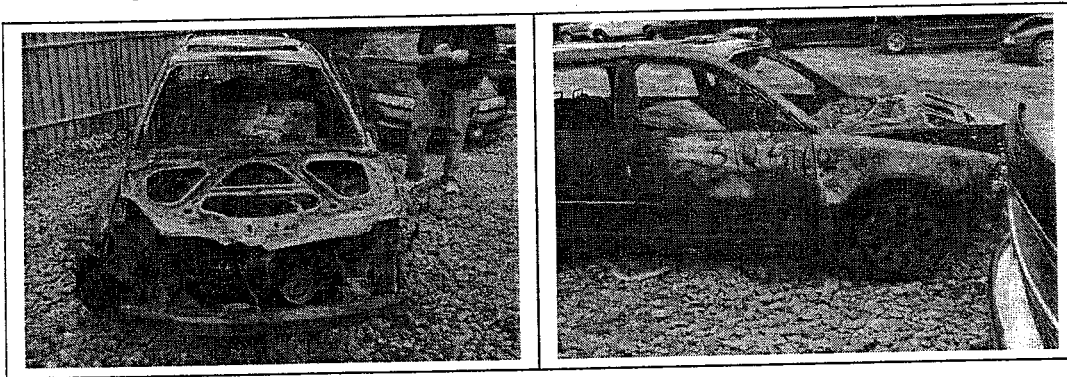


At the time of our examination, the vehicle did not exhibit license plates. State safety, emissions, and inspection compliance cannot be confirmed due to the fire consumption of the windshield placard number.

The vehicle registered miles of road utility cannot be determined due to fire damage to the instrument cluster. The best overall description of the subject vehicle is a German designed and manufactured wagon displacing an approximate curb weight of 3,424 pounds.

EXTERIOR EXAMINATION

The subject vehicle is finished dark gray metallic in color and is appointed with four doors and a rear lift gate, completing the 188 inch long, by 69 inch wide, by 59 inch high platform.



There was no evidence of historic unrepaired impact damage on the exterior sheet metal body components. The exterior exhibits signs of fire related damage with emphasis to the front.

An examination of the wheel assemblies disclosed OEM (original equipment of the manufacturer) aluminum alloy wheels, coupled to radials size P195/65R16. The rear left tire was manufactured by Bridgestone and rear right tire by Turanza.



The front left and right tires were consumed by fire with more emphasis to the left front tire.

All windows, including the sunroof, were fractured due to the heat of the fire.

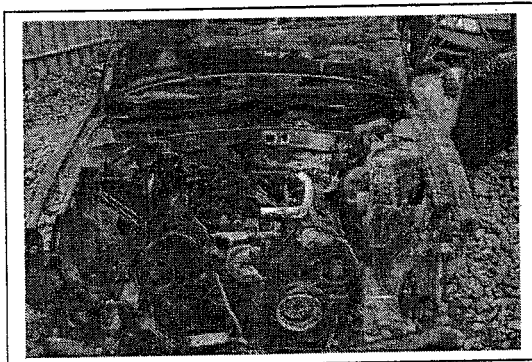
INTERIOR EXAMINATION

The passenger compartment is appointed with two front bucket seats and a rear bench seat. All seating surfaces were consumed by fire related damage.

The interior physical evidence confirms the fire initiated within the power plant compartment



POWER PLANT EXAMINATION



The subject vehicle is equipped with a 2.8 liter V6 cylinder power plant coupled to a five speed automatic transmission providing the vehicle with front wheel drive.

Examination of the power plant compartment revealed evidence of severe fire damage.

All components and assemblies are either partially or fully consumed by fire damage.

ORIGIN OF CAUSE

The locus point of the vehicular fire is within the power plant compartment, more specifically in the left side area near the fender. The fire, itself, originated due to an electrical short in the ground of an electrical harness in the area. In addition, there is evidence of a high voltage electrical short circuit to the terminal lead of the vehicle's battery to the ECM. The wire shorted out against the vehicle's steel

cowl with temperatures high enough to weld the 12 gauge wire against the body panel.



Review of the vehicle's service history profile disclosed damage in the same area, as the locus point, on February 19, 2006 that was subsequently repaired by Auto Body Craftsman of Island Heights, New Jersey.



RECALL INVESTIGATION

This organization initiated a computerized search within our databanks of safety related recalls and technical service bulletins identified by the National Highway Traffic and Safety Administration as well as the vehicle manufacturer.

At this time, no recalls or technical service bulletins have been identified relative to any abnormality of the subject vehicle's electrical systems that may predispose the said vehicle to fire occurrences.

ENGINEERING CONCLUSIONS

Incorporated within the confines of this forensic automotive engineering report, it is the opinion of this organization that the following facts have been identified for your consideration.

1. Based upon the physical evidence, the fire loss is a result of an electrical short circuit of an electrical harness near the front left fender headlamp area. This area had been historically repaired subsequent to a collision event.

2. Additional evidence revealed a significant short circuit from the ground terminal of the battery to the ECM of the vehicle.

3. This organization concludes that Auto Body Craftsman of Island Heights, New Jersey is responsible for the loss. The vehicle should be secured and placed on hold for their examination.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide forensic engineering insight relative to the loss in question. Should you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Very truly yours,

Tom McNamara, MSME
Director and Principal of the Firm

