

CL-10220572-5103

[REDACTED]
SAM JACKSON LEGATE*
JAVIER ESPINOZA**
DANIELA LABINOTI**
EMILIO FLORES**
JOSEPH ISAAC

[REDACTED] 2008 MAR -3 AM 10:10
[REDACTED]
EL PASO, TEXAS
VOICE [REDACTED]
FAX [REDACTED] DR [REDACTED]
*ALSO MEMBER OKLAHOMA BAR
*ALSO MEMBER NEW MEXICO BAR

February 22, 2008

NHTSA Headquarters
Office of Defects Affecting Motorizing Safety
1200 New Jersey Ave., SE
West Building
Washington, DC 20590

CERTIFIED MAIL RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED

RE: 1997 Jaguar XK8

Dear Gentlemen:

Request is hereby made for you to investigate and recall 1997 Jaguar XK8s for defective wheel bearings failure, which cause the wheel to lock up while the vehicle is moving with extreme risk of serious, if not fatal, collisions. This hazard definitely affects the safety of the motoring public.

I purchased a brand new 1997 Jaguar XK8 from Jaguar of El Paso. On or about February 8, 2008, as the car was traveling at approximately 55 miles per hour the front right steer tire locked up. The car pulled, vehicles around my car slammed on their brakes and tried to avoid serous impact. The car skidded to a stop off the side of the road. The front right wheel totally locked up. The tow truck had to lift the entire vehicle on board and deliver it to the Jaguar dealership (Jaguar of El Paso). The dealership notified me that the wheel bearings failed on the right front wheel.

Everyone I talked to confirmed that wheel bearing was defective. Defective wheel bearings that freeze the movement of the front steer tire are extremely dangerous to the motoring public.

Wheel bearings require no maintenance or lubrication and should last the life of the car. This Jaguar has less than 36,000 miles on it, has never been in an accident, has been garaged and traveled less than an average of 3,500 miles a year.

I have notified Jaguar of this problem. I personally talked to Danielle and her supervisor Dennis at Jaguar customer service. They have denied any responsibility claiming the vehicle is 11 years old. Dennis tried to tell me that lack of maintenance was the cause of bearing failure. I requested the opportunity to talk to Jaguar's General Counsel and was denied any assistance.

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LB

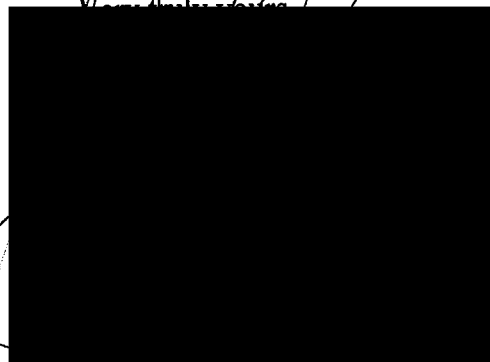
NHTSA Headquarters
RE: 1997 Jaguar XK8
February 22, 2008
Page 2

I retained a Ph.D mechanical engineer to investigate the wheel bearing failure. Enclosed is his report. His report proves there was defective wheel bearing and that no maintenance is required to be done to wheel bearings.

Please investigate this dangerous hazard before someone is killed.

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Encl.

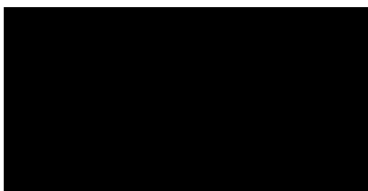
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Southwest Engineering Associates
3616 Derick, El Paso, TX 79925

February 20, 2008



El Paso, TX

Re: Your 1997 Jaguar XK8

Dear [REDACTED]:

At your request, I have examined your 1997 Jaguar XK8. As you know the vehicle is currently at the El Paso Jaguar dealer, where you purchased it new in 1997. The vehicle currently has approximately 36,000 miles showing on the odometer and it appears to be in near-new condition.

As you know, the vehicle is at the dealership because the right front wheel froze when it was being driven. The vehicle was towed to the dealership and they contacted you to inform that the right front wheel bearing had failed and that the estimated repair bill was over two thousand dollars. The purpose of my visit to the dealership and my examination was to evaluate the mechanical problem and to provide you with a second opinion as to what caused this failure.

I examined your vehicle on Tuesday afternoon (February 19) and had an opportunity of discussing the problem with the mechanic assigned to it. I was also provided with a written estimate that included the list of parts that they are proposing to replace along with their cost and the cost of installing them.

Attached Figures 1-5 show the parts in question and the dealer estimated repair costs. I confirmed that the basic problem is that the right front wheel roller bearing failed. This vehicle

uses a single bearing at each wheel. This bearing is pressed into a part called the vertical link and does not require (nor does it have provisions for) greasing or maintenance.

Front wheel bearings are designed to last the life of the vehicle and should last at least 100,000 miles. The life of a roller bearing is dependent on the hours of operation at a given speed and the load that it is seeing. The age of the vehicle, in this case, is not a factor. Failure initiates with localized pitting and spallation in the rolling elements and in the races. Failure quickly progresses to the point where the bearing heats up, possibly seizes and in essence can become welded. This accounts for the fact that the wheel froze and the vehicle pulled to the right.

This vehicle has seen very light use and the only explanation as to why the bearing failed is that it was defective (flawed) to begin with. The dealer price for this bearing is about \$139 (in the open market a good bearing (Timken brand) for this application costs about \$31). This bearing failure has resulted in numerous damaged parts (see Figure 5) costing over \$1,800 and a total repair cost of almost \$2,500.

While roller and ball bearings have a finite life, this bearing failed very prematurely. The only explanation, as stated above, is that it was in some form defective to begin with. It is possible that metallurgical examination of the failed bearing might present some clues as to why it failed. (The removal process requires some specialized tools and a press.)

My qualifications for providing opinions in mechanical engineering include BS, MS, and Ph.D. degrees in mechanical engineering. I have taken courses in friction and wear of materials and in bearings and lubrication. I also have over 30 years of teaching and industrial experience and have taught undergraduate and graduate courses in machine design. These courses include discussions of journal and roller bearings and lubrication.

If I can be of further assistance, do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely Yours,



Michael Huerta, Ph.D., P.E.

Enclosures: 5 figures

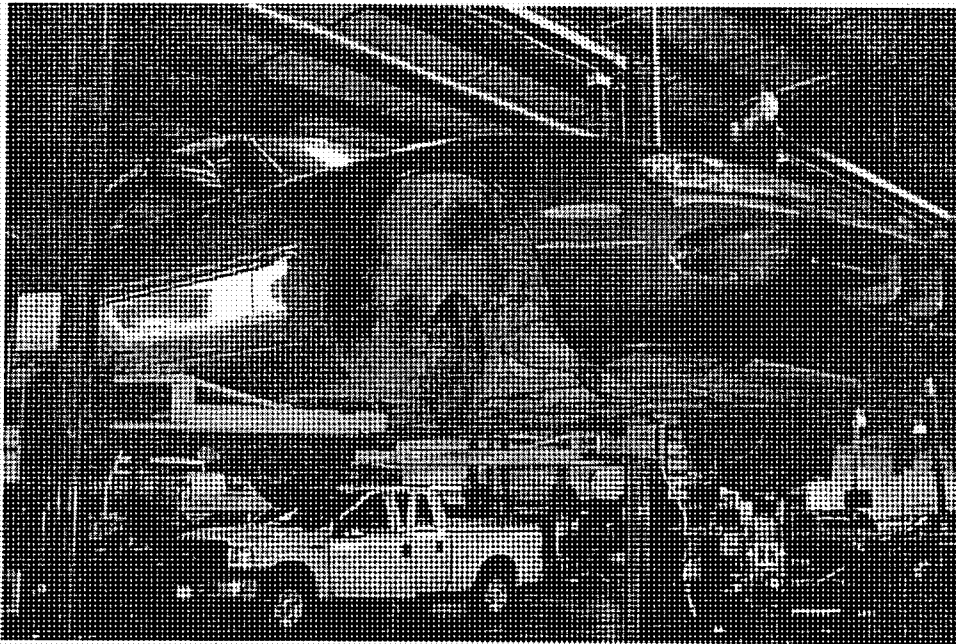


Figure 1. Vehicle on lift. Right front tire has been removed. This exposed the damaged rotor. Rotor was damaged when it moved outward after bearing failed. Rotor scraped on caliper retaining bracket.

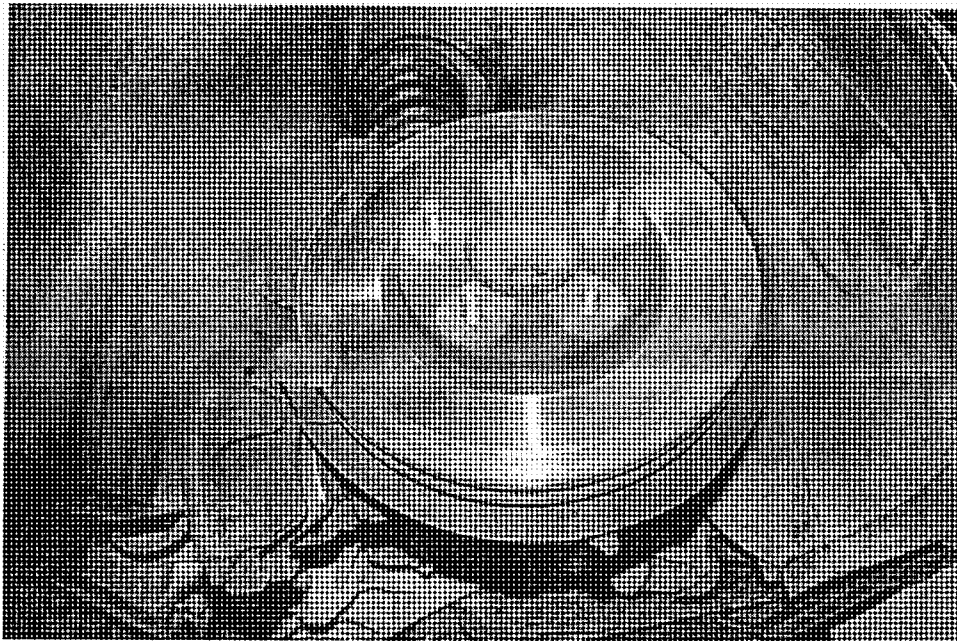


Figure 2. Outside view of rotor with caliper moved to side.
Note damaged area on rotor face.

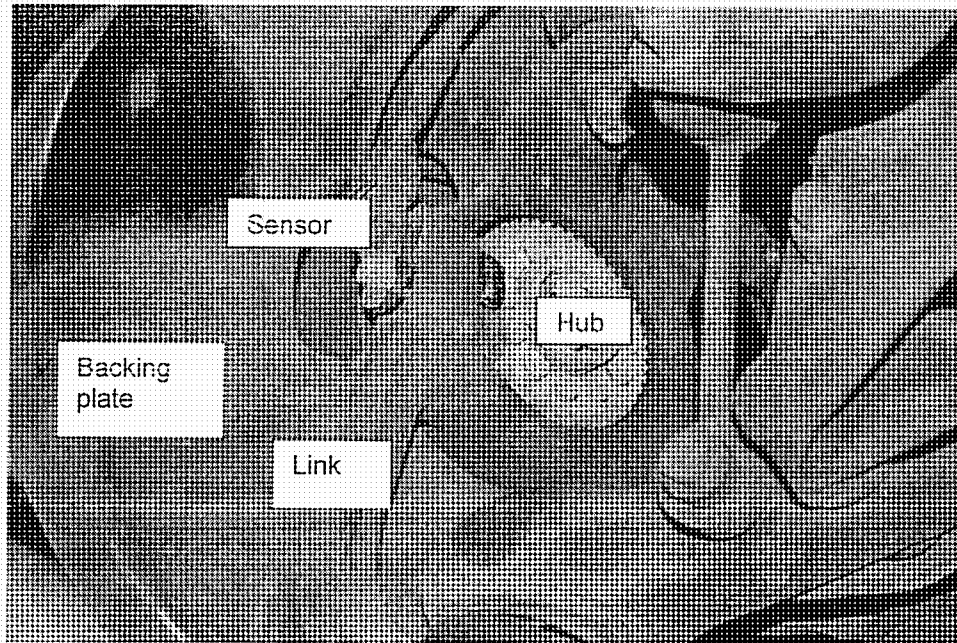


Figure 3. Inside view of brake backing plate (disk shield). This figure shows the hub, link, speed sensor, and the disk shield. The bearing is not visible as it is pressed in place (with a 3-ton force) and internal to the vertical link and hub. However, the bearing is clearly frozen. Sensor appears to have been over- heated.



Figure 4. Photograph of tire showing area that dragged when bearing failed and froze, locking the wheel.

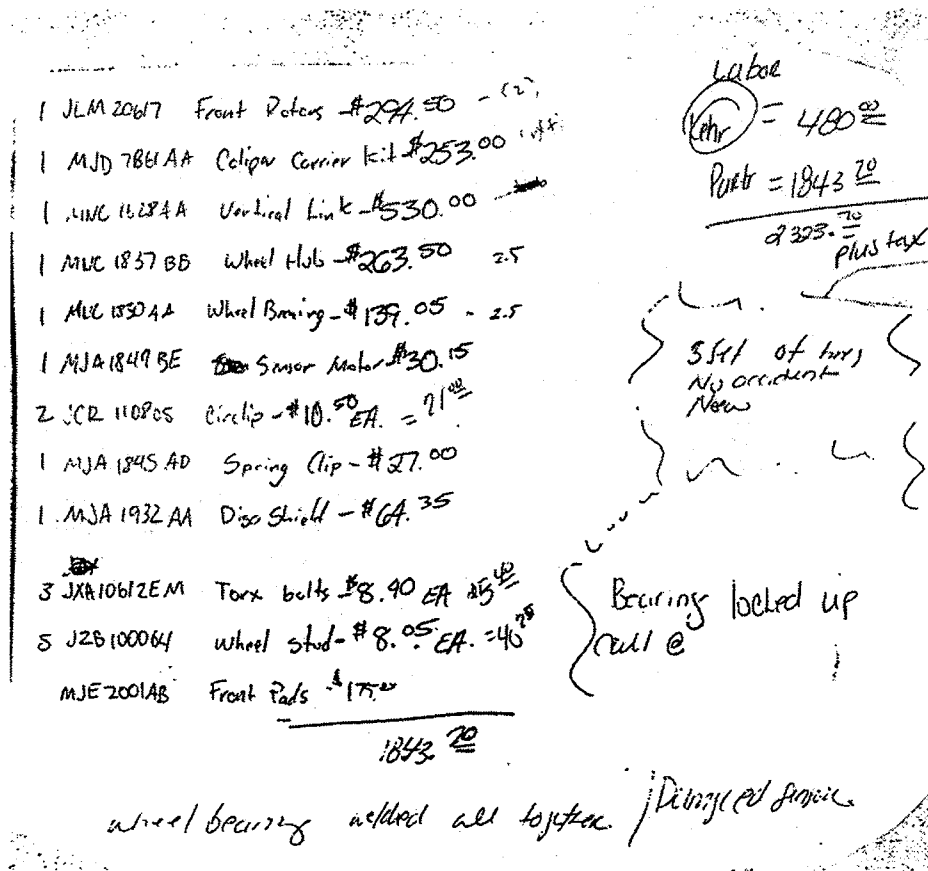


Figure 5. Proposed work (prepared by the Jaguar dealer).

The Jaguar dealer is proposing to replace both rotors (they will not replace only one side, nor will they machine them down.). They are proposing to replace the caliper mounting, the vertical link (it is not clear that this part is damaged. However, they feel that if they press out the old bearing it may show some damage.). They are also proposing to replace the wheel hub, wheel bearing, sensor motor, and various small parts. In addition, they are proposing to replace both front brake pads. All of this collateral damage was caused by the failed bearing.

The total repair bill, with tax, would be about \$2,475.00