



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

Deputy Administrator

1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20590

October 3, 2008

The Honorable Jo Bonner
Member, U.S. House of Representatives
11 North Water Street, Suite 15290
Mobile, AL 36602

NVS-216 et
Ref. # 10239348

Dear Congressman Bonner:

Thank you for your correspondence dated June 9 on behalf of your constituent, [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] wrote concerning his rear view mirror that allegedly leaked an unknown substance on the seats and console of his model year (MY) 1999 Jaguar XJ8. [REDACTED] also stated he found other examples of mirror "explosions" on the INTERNET and that the substance is toxic and contains mercury. Your correspondence was originally addressed to the Environmental Protection Agency, which then forwarded it to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). Your correspondence was received by NHTSA's Office of Defects Investigation (ODI) on July 1, 2008.

NHTSA is the Federal agency responsible for improving safety on our Nation's highways. We are authorized to order manufacturers to recall and repair vehicles or items of motor vehicle equipment when our investigations indicate that they contain safety defects in their design, construction, or performance. In order for the agency to initiate an investigation, we look carefully at the body of consumer complaints and other available data to determine whether a defect may exist.

We appreciate the report you provided on behalf of [REDACTED]. Reports from motorists are a very important source of information for us. [REDACTED] reported that the electrochromatic "auto dimming" rear view mirror in his vehicle released a dark substance into the vehicle interior. [REDACTED] and his wife experienced sore throats the next day and became concerned that exposure to the released substance was the cause. This report was added to an ongoing analysis of electrochromatic mirror failure by ODI's Defects Assessment Division. We have taken the liberty of contacting [REDACTED] and he forwarded his failed mirror to NHTSA for further examination. We also examined other failed mirrors of similar construction.



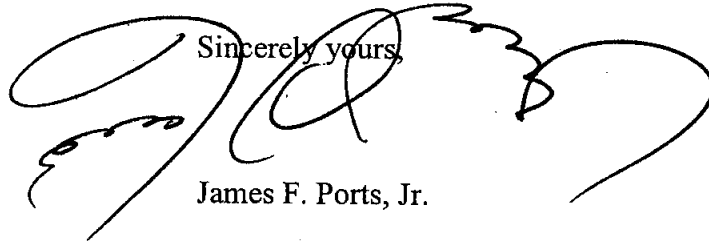
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Our analysis is complete and we have concluded that this issue does not present an unreasonable safety risk. The main ingredient in the mirror is propylene carbonate, which has similar properties to acetone. It can damage plastic surfaces but does not harm skin with minor exposure. It is an irritant that could be harmful to an occupant's eyes. To better understand the potential for an explosive release of its chemical contents, NHTSA staff tested sample mirrors by placing them in a high temperature environment. Our testing indicates the chemical contents are stable and did not explode at temperatures tested well above what could be expected inside a vehicle compartment. Also, NHTSA staff contacted the mirror manufacturer (Magna-Donnelly) and confirmed the company has no record of any explosion involving its product. Based on this information, we do not believe that it is likely [REDACTED] or other drivers are at risk of eye injury due to a chemical explosion emanating from their rear view mirror.

I hope this information is helpful. If you have any questions or if your constituent has other issues with his vehicle that he believes to be safety related, please have your staff contact me or Mr. Ronald L. Medford, Senior Associate Administrator for Vehicle Safety at (202) 366-9700.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James F. Ports, Jr.', with a large, stylized flourish extending to the right.

James F. Ports, Jr.

Enclosure:
Constituent's Correspondence

cc: Washington Office