Cassens Transport Company
One of the Cassens Corp. Companies

January 4th, 2011

US Department of Transportation
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
Office of Defect Investigation
1200 New Jersey Avenue Southeast
Washington, DC 20590

CL-10372103-9105

RE: ODI # 10372103

Dear Sir or Madam,

My name is Brian D. Suhre and I am Vice President – Facilities & Equipment for Cassens Transport Company headquartered in Edwardsville, IL. Cassens operates a fleet of 1,200+ automobile transporters and has been in business since 1933. I am writing this letter as a follow-up to a complaint I filed by telephone on December 22nd, 2010. The ODI number referenced above was assigned to the complaint.

For several years we have been plagued with broken fuel lines on Detroit Diesel MBE4000 engines in 2005–2007 Sterling L-line trucks. Initially the fuel leaks were predominately from cracked high pressure steel lines leading to fuel injector nozzles. NHTSA forced the issuance of a recall (08C-1) of these injector lines and the recall was revised several times before a credible solution was found (vibration dampeners on the lines).

The auto hauling industry has been, and is currently fighting a similar and equally troublesome problem with plastic low pressure fuel lines on the same engines. The plastic lines fail in one of two ways; 1) a crack or split will develop from vibration and/or prolonged exposure to diesel fuel and heat, or; 2) a hole will develop from abrasion against adjacent components due to poor routing.

We first experienced the problem shortly after purchasing Sterling trucks powered by Detroit Diesel MBE4000 engines in 2005. As we introduced more Sterling trucks into the fleet the problem became more pronounced. Cassens has purchased 556 trucks with this configuration. All are still running with the exception of those that have caught fire and burned to destruction (and two that were lost in traffic accidents). We also have 61 tractors with MBE4000, 2007 engines.

I was informed by Detroit Diesel that NHTSA forced a recall for this *exact* problem in trucks being used in general freight such as Coca-Cola, Central Transport, etc. Recall 09C-2 I'm told but, I haven't been able to find the recall to verify. I was also told that this recall would be the solution to our problem. However, when released in mid 2009 it applied to 2007 model engines only and it did <u>not</u> apply to trucks for auto hauling. I immediately began to push for our trucks to be included in the recall and was persuaded to withhold a NHTSA complaint in exchange for their promise to find a solution voluntarily.

Corporate Offices: P.O. Box 468, 145 N. Kansas Street, Edwardsville, IL 62025-0468
(618) 656-3006 • (618) 692-7316 (fax)

NM 01/25/2011 KB

Cassens loaned a tractor to Detroit Diesel for roughly one month in the summer of 2010 so they could develop a solution. A rubber hose was developed to replace the upper hose only. I was told that clearance issues between the fuel pump and the engine block would prohibit installation of a similar hose for the second plastic line. It was *"too expensive to change or relocate the fuel pump"* so the problem will still exist with that line.

December 20th, 2010 Cassens sent the truck that was loaned for initial installation back to Detroit Diesel for reevaluation after which the hose was pronounced to be the solution with minor tweaks. However, this particular line *also* had abrasion and must be replaced. From the beginning I stated that replacing only one hose was not a proper fix because we've had many failures with both.

To add insult to our injuries, I was also told by Detroit Diesel that they would repair on a "fix as failed" basis only, meaning we are expected to run these trucks until the defect raises its ugly head as it has several hundred times in the past. The cost and losses to Cassens and the industry is *huge* and goes well beyond financial impact and environmental concerns. Our customers also suffer losses which is an embarrassment to them and our company. Future failures will negatively impact our CSA 2010 Vehicle Maintenance BASICs. Exposure to the general public is an even greater concern with the potential for slippery road surfaces and fires. I rejected the "fix as failed" idea and was told that if Cassens wanted to do something proactively that the onus would be ours. I find both of these ideas to be preposterous.

Never in the past have we had to resort to initiating a NHTSA recall. I feel that the manufacturers are trying to avoid expense with a disregard for safety and also believe they are selective in which customers are served. I would like to share additional information so you might help us remedy this very frequent and very dangerous situation, and to expound on the losses that Cassens has incurred and wishes to recover.

Ironically... the enclosed picture was taken near Battle Creek, MI on the very day I was offered the "fix as failed" remedy. According to the article "leaking fuel on the engine triggered the fire" which caused major losses to United Road. Luckily the driver and public escaped injury.

Feel free to contact me at (618) 655-2710 which is my office or (618) 581-1226 which is my mobile number. I am eager to find a fix in the immediate future. We have two trucks down with on the road failures of these fuel lines as I write this letter... one for eleven days now.

Sincerely,

CASSENS TRANSPORT COMPANY

Brian D. Suhre
Vice President – Facilities & Equipment

cc: Nate Seymour via Nate.Seymour@dot.gov

Exit 95

KEVIN HARE/THE ENQUIRER

Fire damages vehicles

Firefighters check the results of a blaze that destroyed the cab of a semitruck Monday morning at Mercury Drive near I-94. Michigan State Police said leaking fuel on the engine triggered the fire, which also destroyed some of the cars it was hauling. No one was hurt.

UNITED ROAD

MAYBE A LITTLE FLYER FOR OUR FIRE TO GET LINES REPLACED

Kevin Hare/The Enquirer

Firefighters check the results of a blaze that destroyed the cab of a semitruck Monday morning at Mercury Drive near I-94.

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UNITED ROAD UNIT NEAR BATTLE CREEK, MI
ON 12/21/10

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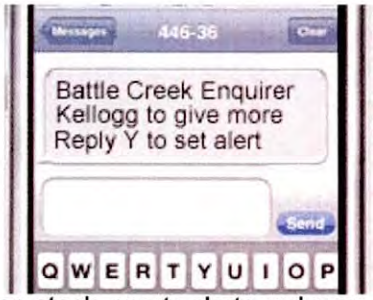

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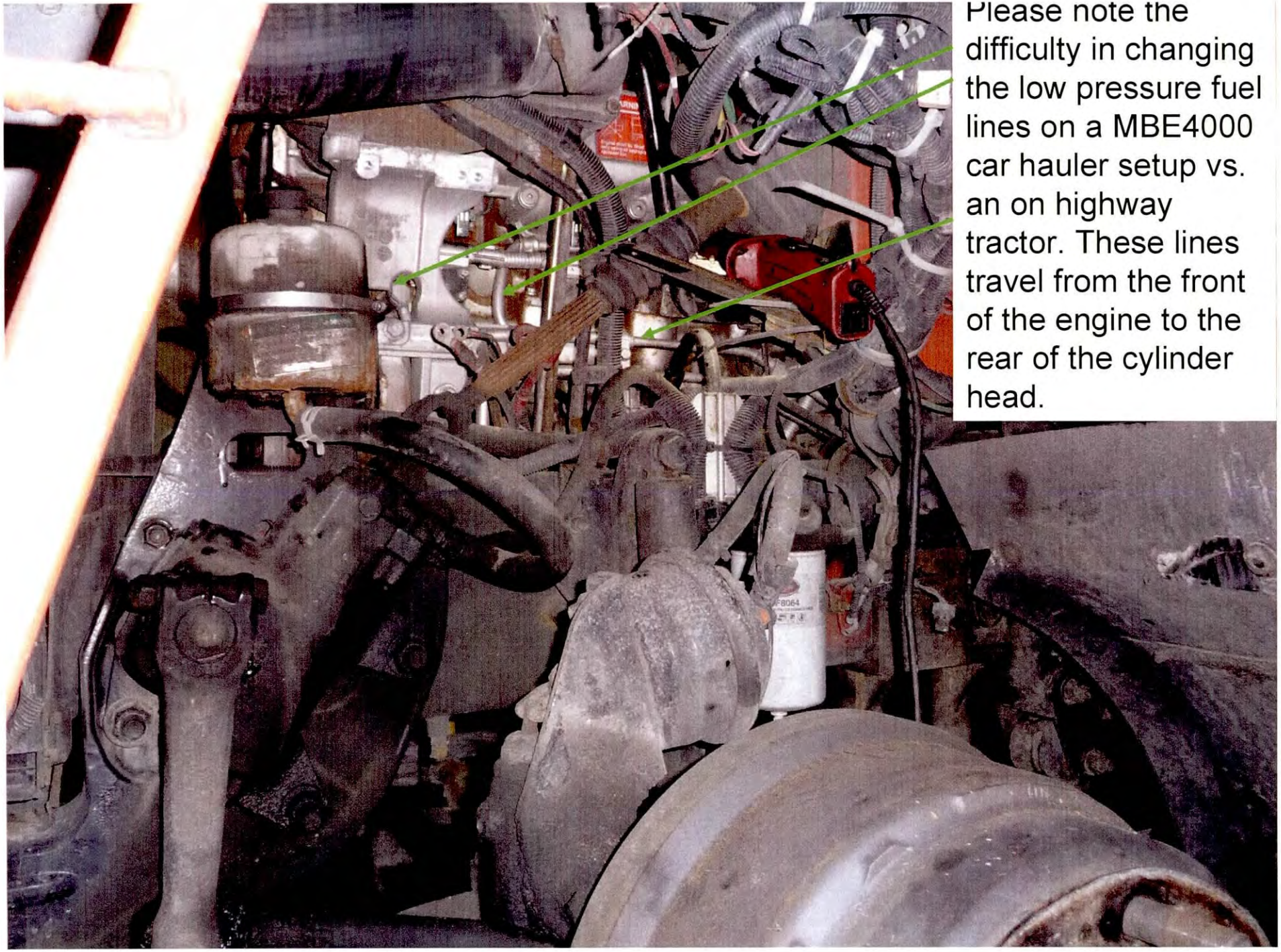
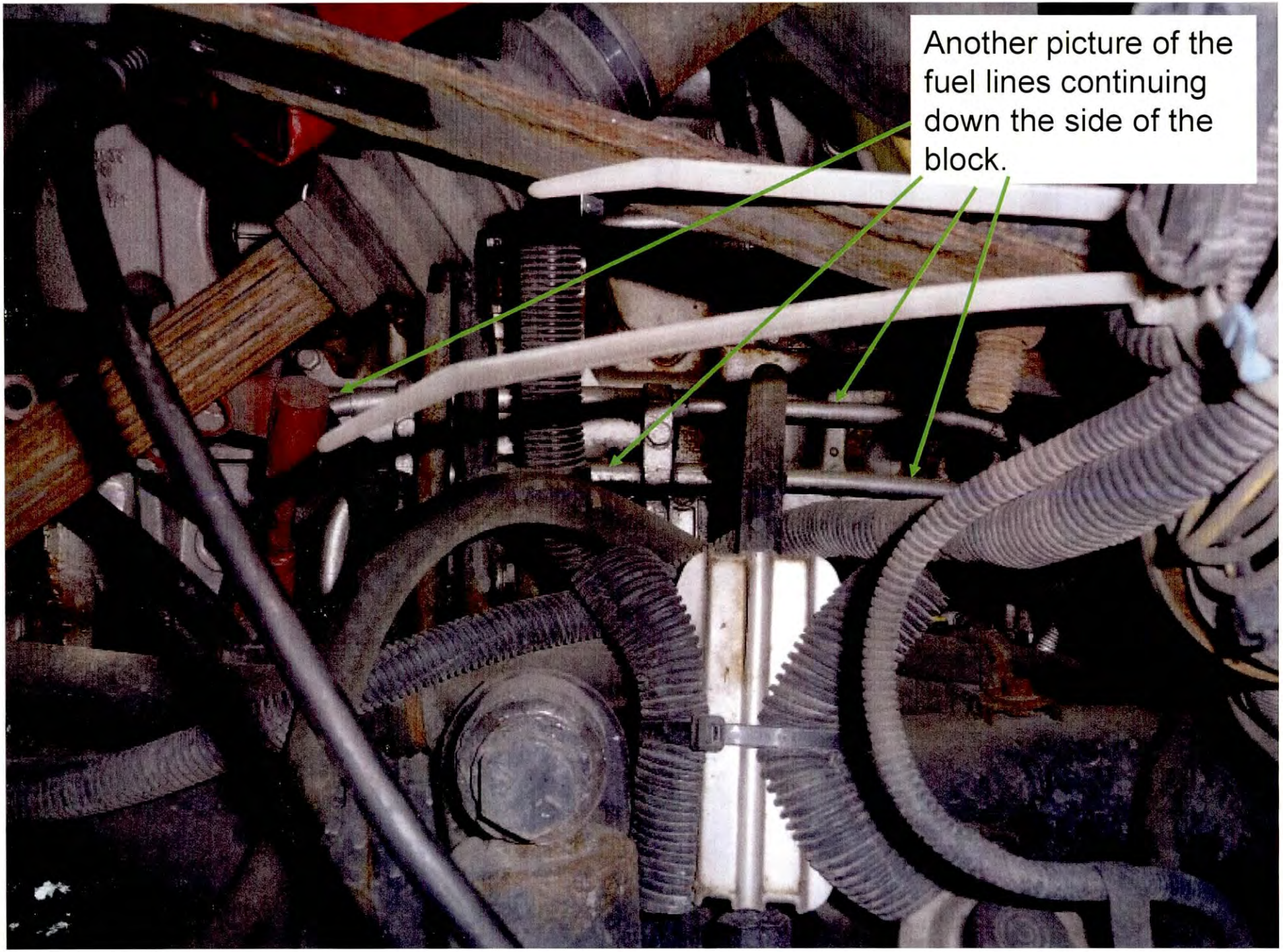
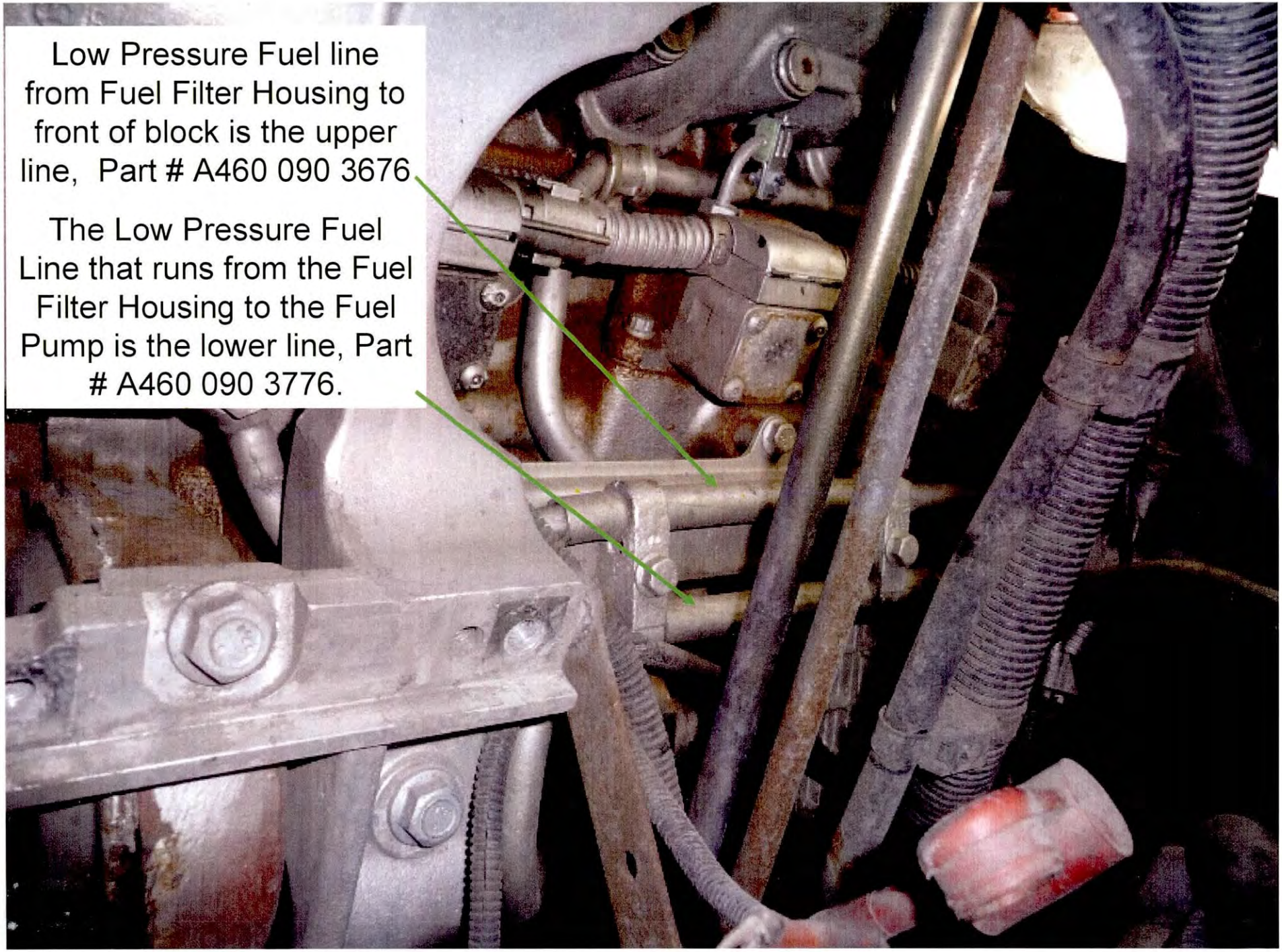
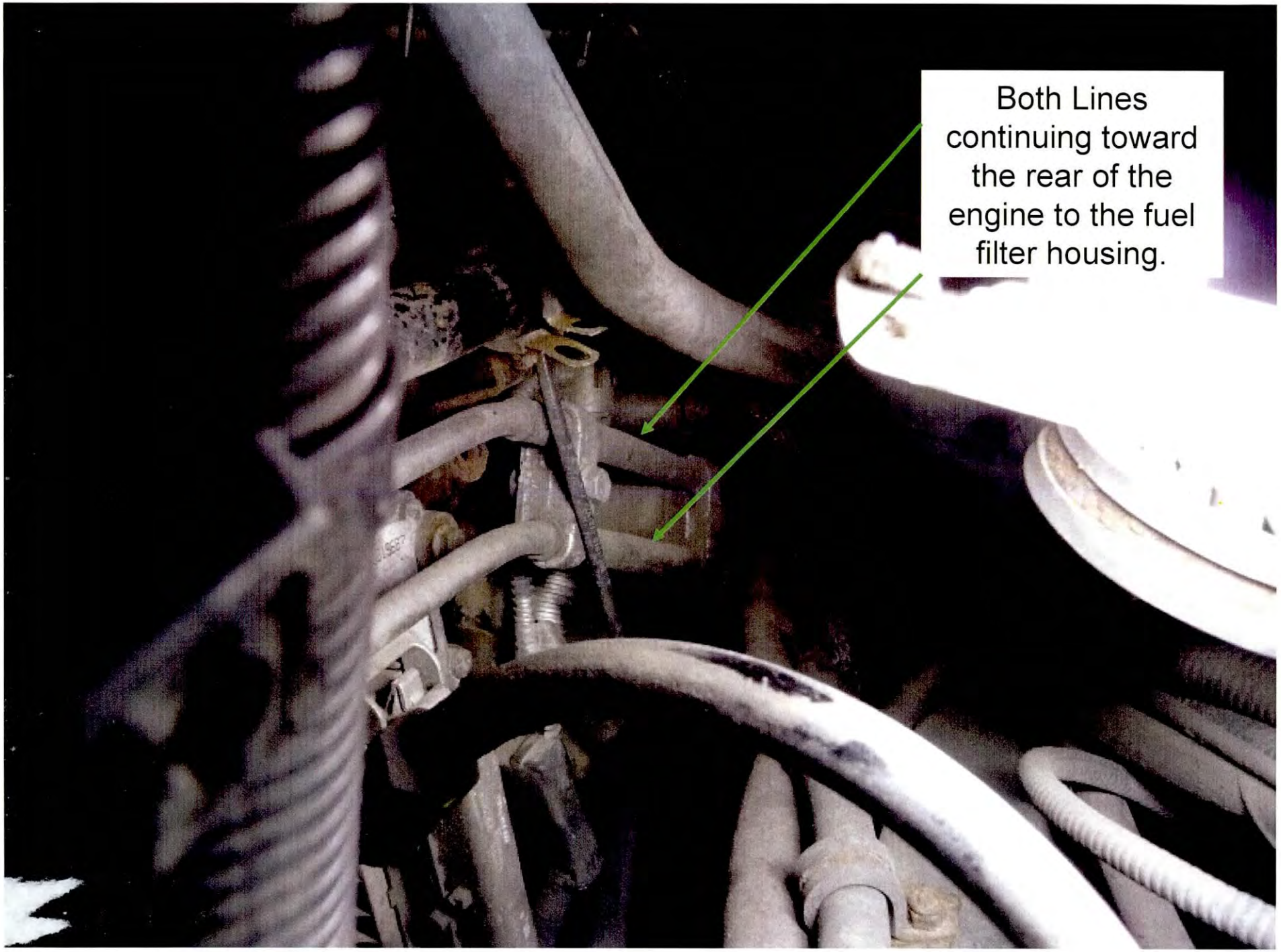
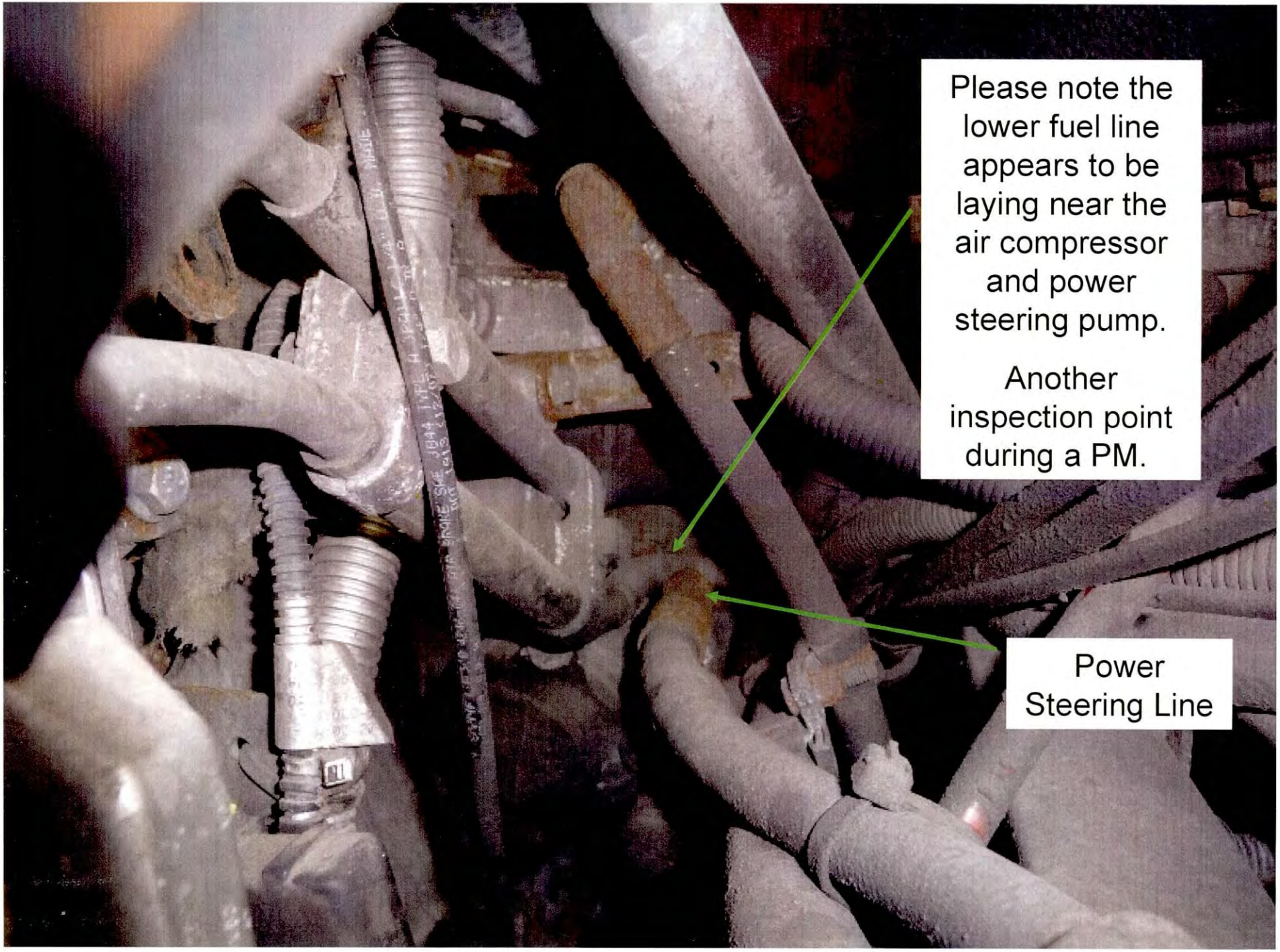


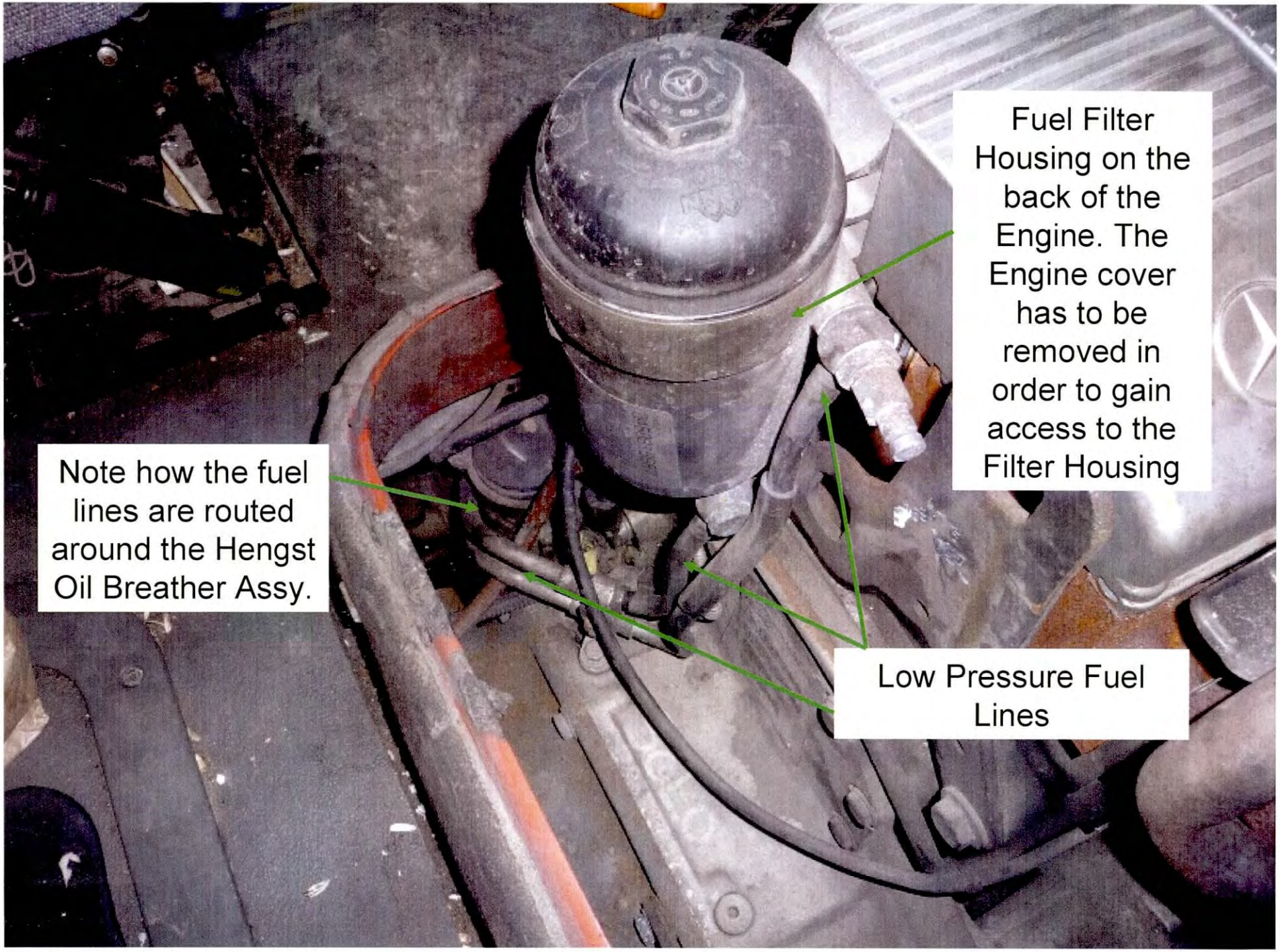
Please note the difficulty in changing the low pressure fuel lines on a MBE4000 car hauler setup vs. an on highway tractor. These lines travel from the front of the engine to the rear of the cylinder head.

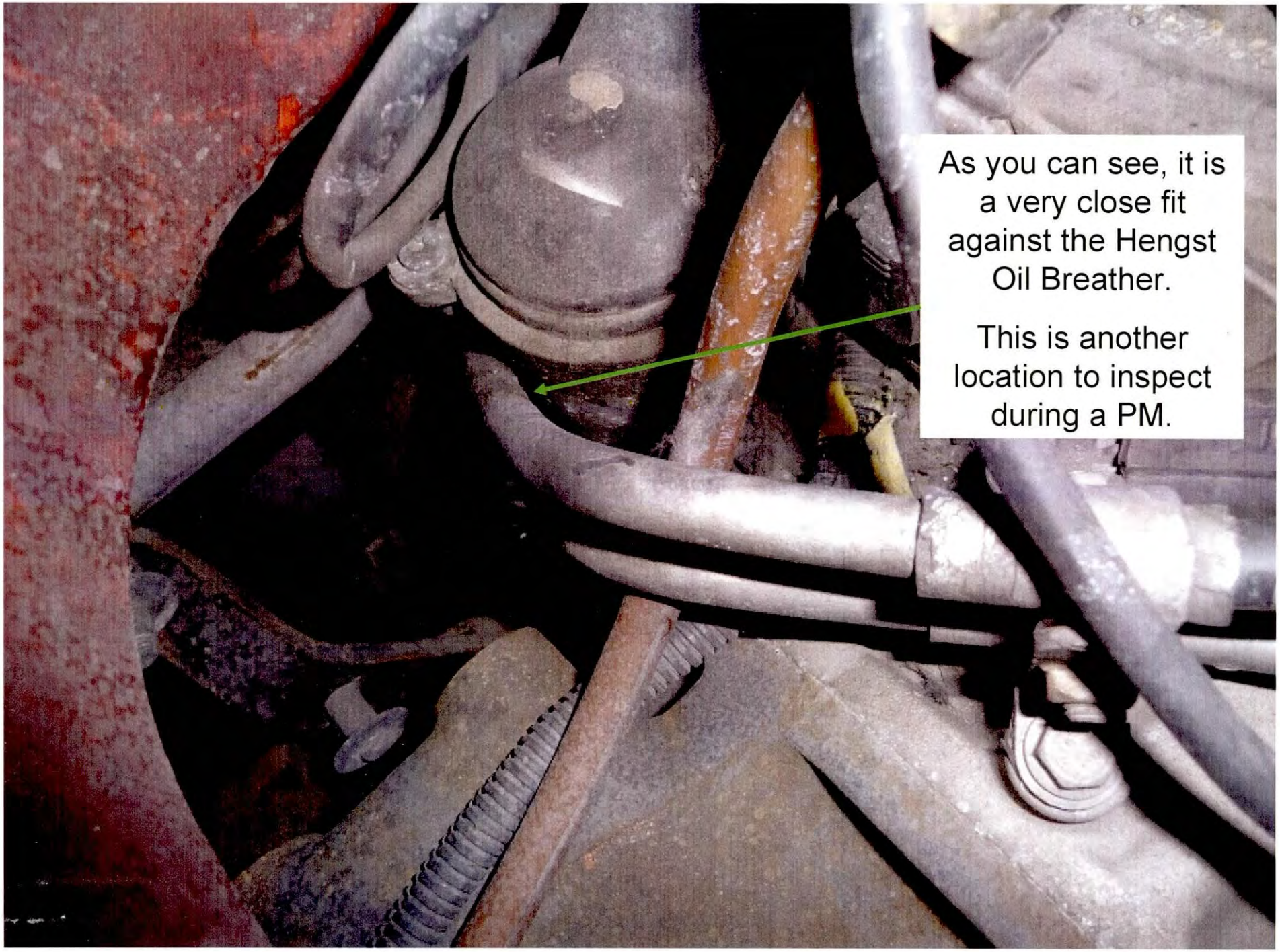

Another picture of the fuel lines continuing down the side of the block.

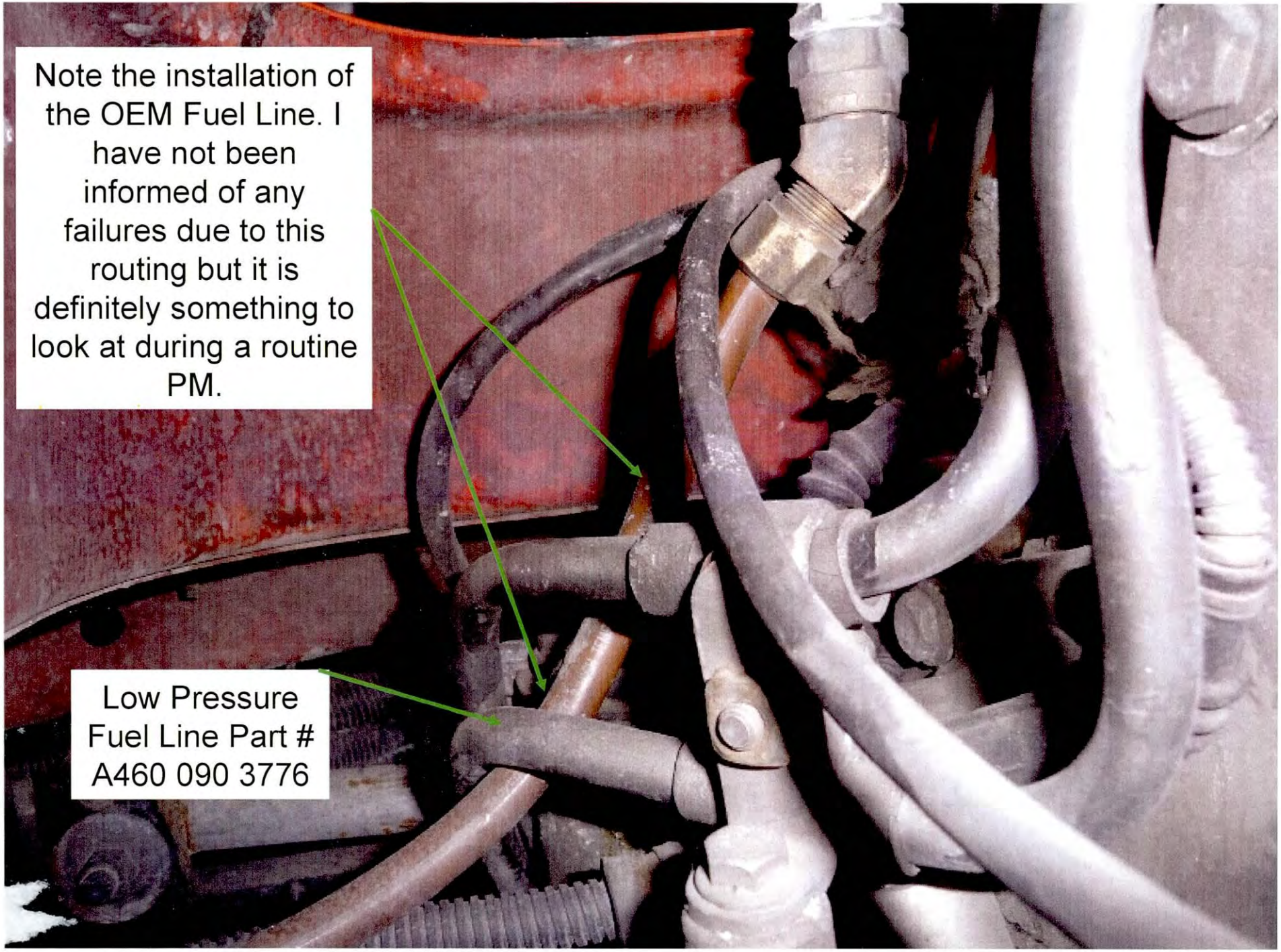

Low Pressure Fuel line from Fuel Filter Housing to front of block is the upper line, Part # A460 090 3676
The Low Pressure Fuel Line that runs from the Fuel Filter Housing to the Fuel Pump is the lower line, Part # A460 090 3776.

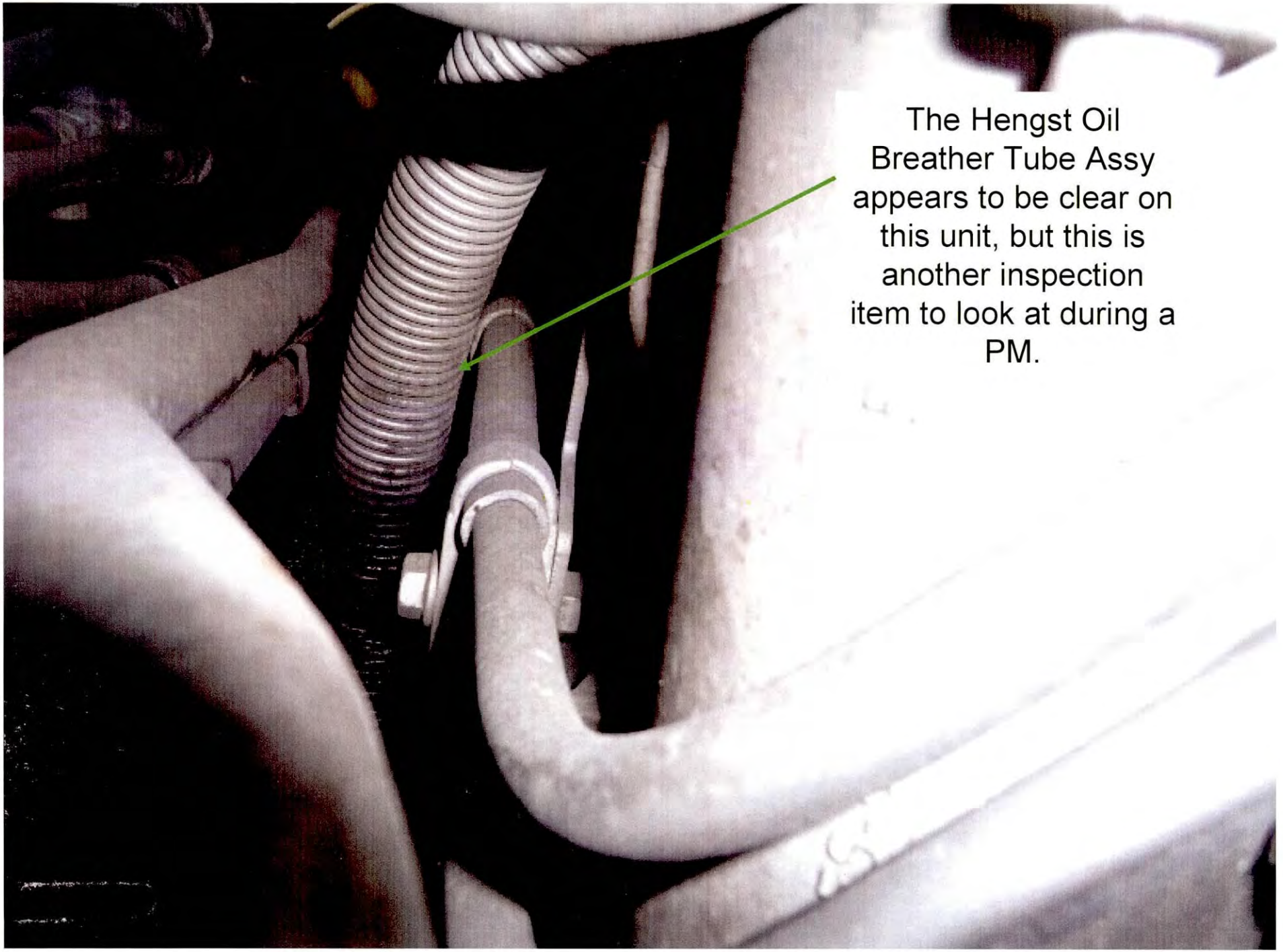

Both Lines continuing toward the rear of the engine to the fuel filter housing.


Please note the lower fuel line appears to be laying near the air compressor and power steering pump.
Another inspection point during a PM.
Power Steering Line


Fuel Filter Housing on the back of the Engine. The Engine cover has to be removed in order to gain access to the Filter Housing
Note how the fuel lines are routed around the Hengst Oil Breather Assy.
Low Pressure Fuel Lines


As you can see, it is a very close fit against the Hengst Oil Breather.
This is another location to inspect during a PM.


Note the installation of the OEM Fuel Line. I have not been informed of any failures due to this routing but it is definitely something to look at during a routine PM.
Low Pressure Fuel Line Part # A460 090 3776


The Hengst Oil Breather Tube Assy appears to be clear on this unit, but this is another inspection item to look at during a PM.

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PITNEY BOWES
02 1M $ 01.22⁰
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Cassens Transport Co.
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Edwardsville, Illinois 62025

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WASHINGTON, DC 20590