

INFORMATION Redacted PURSUANT TO THE FREEDOM OF
INFORMATION ACT (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. 552(B)(6)

Subject: FW:
Date: Tuesday, February 07, 2012 12:14:39 PM
Importance: High

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, January 25, 2012 8:44 AM
To: Smith, Daniel (NHTSA)
Subject: Fwd: ESCALADE FIRE

Dear Dan

Your boss is testifying at a hearing right now on the Chevy Volt and while there are a wide range of reasons to focus on the VOLT, if you take a look at the pictures you will see that the VOLT is just a part of the GM story. My family and I barely escaped the car fire and walked away with our lives- THE ESCALADE FIRES are a far bigger GM story because it is their largest profit margin vehicle and they don't want to deal with it publicly

The letter I sent to GM's CEO, Dan Akerson, is pretty straight forward and explains what happened with the vehicle. I have followed up with Bob Ferguson by email and have not received a response. They seem not to care because nobody was injured or killed in the fire and have attempted to brush it off.

I am not sure how this approach makes sense as this new GM allegedly planned to change its culture and focus on the safety of the driver. I sent a similar letter to Mr. Strickland and the NHTSA along with the CPSC but to date neither has responded.

In a follow-up note to Bob Ferguson, the head of Policy and Government Affairs for GM, I informed him that I want GM to do the following:

- a letter to all Escalade owners of record reminding them to get their recalls performed
- a letter to all Cadillac dealers asking that they perform recall services with the GM standards or better
- replace the lost vehicle with a new vehicle
- some form of compensation to the children in the car
- a formal letter of apology

With some luck they will do what is right and call me with a solution but so far no interest in discussing.

Best Regards,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

RR
020712
TGW

[REDACTED]
McLean, Virginia
[REDACTED]

Mr. Daniel F. Akerson
Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer
General Motors Company
300 Renaissance Center
Detroit, MI 48265-3000

Dear Mr. Akerson:

On the evening of June 30, 2011, my wife [REDACTED] picked up our 2008 Cadillac Escalade from Moore Cadillac in Chantilly, Virginia. The vehicle (Vin #1GYFK6678R [REDACTED]) was in the shop for the windshield wiper fluid heater recall problem, an oil change, repair a lock on one of the doors and perform an evaluation of the DVD system that wasn't working correctly—they claim they fixed the recall problem and the invoice is attached. Within 24 hours the car went up in flames. It would suggest they did a very poor job or the more likely option is they did nothing on the recall item.

Before I go into the actual event, let me state that the response I received from both General Motors and Moore Cadillac was disappointing and each organization demonstrated a lack of concern for the safety of its customers. Perhaps safety was not an expressed concern because my family made it out of the Escalade alive, but your staff and that of the dealer were quick to move beyond the event and attempt to sell us a new vehicle with a goodwill discount of a few thousand dollars off the MSRP. The focus and attention was in the wrong place and I was embarrassed for them by the suggestion of a discount.

From all that I have read about the new GM and its transformation, I thought the culture would change and that the approach towards safety and the treatment of its customers would drive the new business model and lead the company and the U.S. auto industry to a new beginning. If the response I received from your staff is an indication of the culture of change, I think we can both agree that the transformation process takes longer than desired. I am reaching out to you as the leader of the organization to do the right thing for the safety of the customer and the American people.

You should know that I spoke to your staff about a couple of items and encouraged them to reach out to all Escalade owners and display the photographs from our car fire so they would adequately present the dangers of ignoring the recall and that if it is done improperly you can

have a problem. We all know that fires are serious and can be deadly!

It has been approximately six months since the event and I have heard nothing back from either GM or the Cadillac dealership. I considered purchasing an advertisement with the photos of my burning vehicle in the WPost, WSJ, NYT and the Free Press, but held off hoping that GM and Moore would honor its commitment to safety and the customer.

We all know hope is not a strategy that provides results, so it is time to move forward. I have submitted a written complaint on behalf of all consumers with the CPSC, DOT, NHTSA and the appropriate Congressional staff. As the weeks unfold I am sure it is possible for some political or traditional/social media interest in the issue to develop, but I don't think it will be necessary under your leadership.

Like all business sectors the auto industry continues to battle the economic ills that have prevented the type of growth we want and need for our country. With the possibility of growth and an improving economy in 2012, the last thing any company needs or wants is additional government interference.

July 1st Car Fire

Around noon, on July 1, my wife, daughter, two sons, a nephew and I departed for a family wedding in Akron, Ohio. We had three other sons in another vehicle with my granddaughter following us on the trip.

At approximately 1:50, I detected an odor that smelled like burning plastic and it began to penetrate the front seat area of the vehicle. Within seconds my son saw gray smoke coming from the dashboard and it began to burn our lungs. Within about 20 seconds I was able to pull off the road (I-70) just about 1 mile from exit 1B in Washington County, Maryland near Hancock. I put the car in park, turned off the engine and got everybody out of the vehicle as quickly as possible.

I then went back to the driver side of the vehicle and opened the door so I could hit the ONSTAR button and request assistance. As I was reaching in the gray smoke became heavier so I closed the door and went to the rear of the vehicle and started tossing the luggage to the kids and my wife so they could get it away from the car. Most importantly we got the important cargo (my family) to a safe distance away from the car.

As I closed the rear gate of the vehicle the gray smoke turned black and filled up the front half of the car and within about 30 seconds the car alarms were going off and the black smoke and orange flames moved through the car. The car continued to burn with three loud explosive bursts as it blew out the glass, one side door and the rear gate. Fortunately no other individuals or vehicles on I-70 were hurt or damaged.

While we stood on the side of the road in various states of disbelief and watched the vehicle burn our other children were about 3/4 mile away and could see the smoke as they sat in traffic. They called ahead to see if we knew what happened when my daughter answered them saying "it is just burning up." Two of my sons came running up to see what happened and while they were relieved we were alive, they were both stunned and traumatized as they witnessed the flames flowing from the car. My third son and his five year old daughter drove on the shoulder to get closer to us and watched and listened to the sounds of a burning car.

About 10 minutes or so after the fire started, the Washington County Fire Department and Maryland State Police Department arrived on the scene and extinguished the vehicle fire and the brush on the side of the road (the fire was so intense the outline of the vehicle remains etched in the shoulder). When we explained what had happened to the authorities they told us how lucky we were to be alive and if I had tried to drive another mile to the exit we would not have survived- they again stated how very fortunate we were to be together.

GEICO followed up with its investigation of the fire and hired Mr. Tom Pavis, Trifactor Consultants Investigative Services, to do the review. Mr. Pavis, a certified fire and explosion investigator, was “unable to identify the actual cause of this fire because of the extensive fire damage within the dashboard and the lack of any physical evidence to determine the exact cause of the fire....The electrical cause for this fire could not be eliminated.... The investigator considered, investigated, and eliminated all of the other possible causes for this fire.”

Because of the lack of clear and absolute evidence for the cause of the fire, GEICO informed us they would not pursue a claim against either party. I am asking that you take a look at this critical safety issue to protect the citizens of the United States, and as a taxpayer and shareholder of General Motors I would like your team to demonstrate the right behaviors and standards of a United States Company, and that Moore Cadillac do the same. Your history of leadership in business, your commitment to your fellow man and military service to this great country should make this a very easy fix.

On top of the safety concerns, my family is very upset by the event of July 1st, and that is coupled by the bad dreams and memories my wife and kids still carry from that awful event. My daughter and eldest granddaughter still talk about the flames pouring out of the car and it brings tears from their eyes. You can see from the attached photographs that this was a devastating experience.

We have been loyal GM customers for the past thirty five years and with seven children there have been multiple GM vehicles in our drive way at all times. Because of the way we have been treated, however, we are now down to one, a 2003 Hummer- that is a real shame. In addition, our neighbor disposed of her Escalade just weeks after our fire and replaced it with a different vehicle because she constantly thought something was burning and was afraid her car would catch fire.

I look forward to hearing back from you or your senior designee to discuss how GM can do the right thing by the consumer and deliver a safe product to all of us.

Best Regards,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Attachments (5): Photos of burning vehicle and Moore Cadillac Invoice
HARD COPY TO BE SENT BY MAIL