

CL-10597179-1127

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

Admitted in PA and NJ

JUN -3 2014

**VIA PRIORITY MAIL**

Tracking No.: 9405 5036 9930 0303 8272 42

May 27, 2014

Associate Administrator for Safety Assurance  
NSA-10  
NHTSA HQ  
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE  
Washington, DC 20590

Re: Suspension Collapse  
1999 Mercedes-Benz E-300

Dear Sir or Madame:

I want to report a failure of my Mercedes-Benz car that put my wife and me at risk while traveling at highway speeds. In addition to endangering us this failure and the resulting loss of suspension parts created a danger to other cars on the highway.

**Description of the Failure**

On Sunday, May 25, 2014, my wife and I were returning from New York City. We were traveling south on the New Jersey Turnpike when the front suspension of my 1999 Mercedes-Benz E-300 collapsed after hitting a bump in the pavement. We heard a few loud thuds a few seconds apart as some things struck the bottom of the car. In my rearview mirror I saw cars behind me swerving to avoid something on the road. Fortunately I did not lose control of the car. I stopped on the shoulder of the road at my first chance, about a quarter mile from the bump. I could see that the left front suspension had collapsed. I have no information as to whether other cars were affected by any parts that came loose.

**The Car and Related Data**

Vehicle: 1999 Mercedes-Benz E-300  
Chassis: 210.025  
VIN: WDBJF25H7XA [REDACTED]  
Mileage: 151,830 (current)  
Failure Date: May 25, 2014, at approximately 4:45 p.m.  
Location: NJ Turnpike (I-95) south, estimated within 5 miles of the Lincoln Tunnel

[REDACTED] MT. LAUREL, NJ [REDACTED]

ET  
6914  
SMD

This car was first sold and operated in Florida. I bought the car in Florida in 2006 and brought it to my home in New Jersey. Since then it has been regularly serviced and maintained by Mercedes-Benz of Cherry Hill (NJ). The firm's body shop called my attention to the spring perches in the course of unrelated body work in late 2013. I was advised to contact Mercedes-Benz at its North American Headquarters. I did so in February of this year, as you can see from the attached letter. However, I have never received a response, either acknowledging my report or advising me that the car was unsafe to operate.

I was not informed of any suspension defect in the car at the time I bought it in 2006. Of course I would not have bought this or any other car with a known defect of this sort unless it had been corrected by a recall by the manufacturer.

#### **Examination Post-Failure**

On Monday May 26 I removed the left front tire. I could see that the left front spring perch was ripped loose where the spot welding was weakened by rust. I could also see that the spring, together with any related hardware, was missing. Exactly what other parts were dropped onto the highway is unclear to me. It seems pretty clear that the traffic I saw swerving behind me were trying to avoid the parts that had come loose.

#### **The Apparent Defect**

I understand that the weight of the car is carried by the springs. The weight on each side of the front of the car is transferred from the chassis to the spring through a metal stamping called a spring perch. Rather than securely attaching the left and right spring perch to the chassis by bolts or permanent welding the perches were instead merely spot welded. A sealant of some sort was used to prevent the entry of water into the spot weld area.

It appears that the sealing material is not capable of keeping water out of the spot weld area. Instead moisture is retained in the spot weld area allowing rust to form. The rust eventually breaks the spot welds. When the spot welds fail the spring no longer supports the car and the suspension collapses. The spring and attached parts, if any, may then fall on the roadway or burst into the engine compartment. The car can be steered through slight turns but sharper turns will cause the front tire to rub against the car's fender, with possible destruction of the tire.

#### **Prior Reports to NHSTA**

Your agency maintains a database of both recalls and reports of safety-related claims of defects. I can see that the failure of the spring perches in the Mercedes-Benz W-210 series of cars has been reported quite frequently. However, notwithstanding the danger to drivers and occupants of these cars, plus the risk of injury to other motorists dodging or being struck by the failed parts as they bounce down the highway, the agency has yet to issue a recall.

#### **Conclusion**


Please let me know if any further information is needed. I have photographs of the car post-failure. I am having the car taken to Mercedes-Benz of Cherry Hill's body shop.

Associate Administrator for Safety Assurance

May 27, 2014

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Very truly yours,

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.A small black rectangular redaction box covering a name.

cc: Mercedes-Benz of Cherry Hill

[REDACTED]

Admitted in PA and NJ

**VIA PRIORITY MAIL**

Tracking: 9405 5063 9930 0235 9790 64

February 11, 2014

Mercedes-Benz  
1 Mercedes Drive  
Montvale, NJ 07645

Re: Spring Perch/Chassis Failure  
1999 Mercedes-Benz E300TD (W210)  
VIN: WDBJF25H7XA [REDACTED]

Dear Sirs:

I was surprised recently when in connection with some unrelated body repair my Mercedes-Benz dealer's body shop informed me that the left front spring perch on my 1999 E300 TD is rusted and needs to be replaced—at considerable expense. I was further astonished when I learned from several websites that this failure is a well-known defect, apparently peculiar to the W210 cars. I am informed that these cars are subject to a recall in Canada for this problem but not (yet) in the United States.

I understand that because of the design moisture can be trapped between the perch and the chassis to which it is spot welded, possibly through the failure of a protective surface coating. The moisture causes rust which in turn leads to the failure of the welds. This results in complete collapse of the suspension at this part of the chassis.

I purchased this car in 2006 in Florida where its original owner bought and kept the car. Since then I have had all service and repairs done at Mercedes-Benz of Cherry Hill (NJ). This dealer also serviced two Mercedes-Benz cars (W124s) that I had leased or owned prior to my present car

Chassis failure of this sort is a serious product defect and not a routine service or warranty item. Please let me know how the company will have the car suitably repaired. I must also assume that if the left perch is rusted the right perch may soon have the same problem. Also please let me know if my car is safe to drive in the interim? You can reach me as indicated in the letterhead or by my cell phone at [REDACTED]

Very truly yours,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] MT. LAUREL, NJ [REDACTED]

**From:** US\_Postal\_Service@usps.com  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** USPS Shipment Info for 9405503699300235979064  
**Date:** Thursday, February 13, 2014 9:19:25 AM

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This is a post-only message. Please do not respond.

[REDACTED] has requested that you receive a Track & Confirm update, as shown below.

Track & Confirm e-mail update information provided by the U.S. Postal Service.

Label Number: 9405503699300235979064

Service Type: USPS Tracking™

Shipment Activity	Location	Date & Time
Delivered	MONTVALE, NJ [REDACTED]	February 13, 2014 8:45 am
Arrival at Post Office	MONTVALE, NJ [REDACTED]	February 13, 2014 8:44 am
Depart USPS Sort Facility	KEARNY, NJ [REDACTED]	February 12, 2014
Processed at USPS Origin Sort Facility	KEARNY, NJ [REDACTED]	February 12, 2014 10:37 am
Processed at USPS Origin Sort Facility	PHILADELPHIA, PA [REDACTED]	February 11, 2014 10:57 pm
Accepted at USPS Origin Sort Facility	MOUNT LAUREL, NJ [REDACTED]	February 11, 2014 9:42 pm
Electronic Shipping Info Received		February 11, 2014

Reminder: Track & Confirm by email

Date of email request: February 11, 2014

Future activity will continue to be emailed for up to 2 weeks from the Date of Request shown above. If you need to initiate the Track & Confirm by email process again at the end of the 2 weeks, please do so at the USPS Track & Confirm web site at <http://www.usps.com/shipping/trackandconfirm.htm>