

INFORMATION Redacted PURSUANT TO THE FREEDOM OF



U.S. Department
of Transportation

National Highway
Traffic Safety
Administration

DOT Auto Safety Hotline

INFORMATION ACT (FOIA) 5 U.S.C. 552(B)(6)

Vehicle Owner's Questionnaire

To Report Vehicle Safety Defects

1-888-DASH-2-DOT

(1-888-327-4236)

INTERNET: www.nhtsa.dot.gov/hotline

FOR AGENCY USE ONLY 100148

Date Received

Repository ☐

16 JUL 2015
OCT 21 2015

Reference No.
10734497

OWNER INFORMATION (Type or Print)

Name

Address

City

HOUSTON

State

TX

Zip Code

Daytime Telephone Number

E-mail Address

Evening Telephone Number

The information you provide will be used to identify potential safety-related defects. We may share your information with the applicable vehicle manufacturer during an investigation or recall in accordance with the routine uses described in the agency's Privacy Act notice. See 49 FR 53971 (Sep. 3, 2004).

VEHICLE INFORMATION

17 digit Vehicle Identification Number Located at bottom of windshield on driver's side

VINWDBWK54F

Make

MERCEDES BENZ

Model

SLK300

Model Year

2009

Date Purchased

8/15/2011

Dealer's Name and Telephone Number

purchased preowned

Engine:

No: Cylinders

Fuel Type:

Original Owner

☐

Dealer's City

State

Zip Code

Transmission Type

☐

Antilock Brakes

Powertrain

Multiple Failure:

Incident Date(s)

21-JUN-2015

FAILED COMPONENT(S)/PART(S) INFORMATION

Vehicle Component Codes: 980000 UNKNOWN OR OTHER, 110000 ELECTRICAL SYSTEM, 010000 STEERING

Failure Mileage
80000

Failure Speed
70

ADDITIONAL ITEMS TO BE COMPLETED WHEN REPORTING A TIRE FAILURE

Tire Make

Tire Model (Name or Number)

Tire Size (Example P215/65R15)

DOT No. (Example: DOTM19ABC036)

☐ Original Equipment
☐ Prior Repair

Failure Location:

Tire Component Code

Tire Failure Type:

ADDITIONAL ITEMS TO BE COMPLETED WHEN REPORTING A CHILD SEAT FAILURE

Make:

Date Manufactured:

Model No./Name:

Seat Type:

Installation System:

Child Seat Component Code:

Failed Part:

APPLICABLE INCIDENT INFORMATION

(Please describe in detail the incident(s), Failure(s), Crash(es), and injury(ies).)

Crash

☐ Yes ☒ No

Fire

☐ Yes ☒ No

Number of Persons Injured

0

Number of Deaths

0

Reported to Police

N

Narrative Description of Incident(s), Crash(es), and Injury(ies).

Please describe (1) events leading up to the failure, (2) failure and its consequences, and (3) what was done to correct the failure; i.e., parts repaired or replaced (and if old part is available).

I WAS DRIVING DOWN AN INTERSTATE WHEN MY POWER STEERING AND AC WENT OUT AND A BATTERY WARNING MESSAGE APPEARED. SHORTLY AFTER, ANOTHER WARNING APPEARED SAYING TO TURN OFF ENGINE. I HAD TO STOP ON THE SIDE OF THE INTERSTATE AND ENDED UP HAVING TO BE TOWED. THEY DETERMINED I NEEDED A NEW COMPRESSOR, NEW PULLEYS, AND A NEW BELT. AFTER IT WAS "FIXED" THE AC STILL WOULDN'T TURN ON AND IT WAS DIAGNOSED AS A FRONT SAM CONSOLE ISSUE. I GOT THE SAM REPLACED AND THEN AFTER DRIVING ABOUT 30 MILES, MY CHECK ENGINE LIGHT CAME ON AND THE CAR STARTED SHAKING.

Include, if available: Police/Fire Department Report, Photos, and Repair Invoice.

ATTACH ADDITIONAL SHEETS IF NECESSARY

The Privacy Act of 1974-Public Law 93-579 This information is requested pursuant to authority vested in the National Highway Traffic Safety Act and subsequent amendments. You are under no obligation to respond to this questionnaire. Your response may be used to assist the NHTSA in determining whether a Manufacturer should take appropriate action to correct a safety defect. If the NHTSA proceeds with administrative enforcement or litigation against a manufacturer, your response, or a statistical summary thereof, may be used in support of the agency's action.

To whom it may concern:

I would like to inform you of some serious issues I've had with my 2009 Mercedes SLK 300 and especially my customer experience with Mercedes-Benz of Baton Rouge and Houston North. I started to write a Google/Yelp review online, but I wanted to give Mercedes-Benz the chance to hopefully make it better before I write reviews online and spread the word to my network. I would love to write a review that praises MB of Baton Rouge and Houston, but at this point, any review I would write would be scathing.

Here is what happened: My car broke down (A/C and power steering went out, battery light came on, and then a "turn off engine" warning" on the side of I-10 on Sunday, June 21st about 25 miles outside of Baton Rouge. This was only two weeks after I had \$2,000 worth of services done to the car (Service C, new brakes, rotors, etc.). I was able to drive very slow down the shoulder to make it to a gas station to call a tow truck since it was unsafe to drive the car. Since it was a Sunday, I was unable to take it to MB, so I took it to a technician (named Tim) whom I found on Yelp. He took a look at it and determined the belt had come off and been torn up, there were some bad pulleys, and the compressor may need to be replaced. He said I should probably have it taken to Mercedes to get diagnosed, just to be sure. So I had it towed to Mercedes, got a rental car, and drove back to Houston. MB of BR finally had my car diagnosed by 6/23 and they confirmed what Tim had found. They said it would be \$3,200 to fix. The service department at MB of BR was impatient and rude when I asked questions and I also had to repeatedly ask for the diagnostic report to be emailed to me. They didn't respond to calls or emails in a timely manner. In addition, they were condescending to me and my father (whom I'd asked to be on the calls for a second set of ears). They also said they couldn't provide me with a loaner car because I would be taking it out of state and exceeding the mileage limits, and when I asked how much those limits were, they avoided my question altogether and said that there were no loaners even available. I can go into further detail on this if you'd like, but long story short, it was a horrendous and stressful experience.

I understand that the BR MB Service Manager is also the Parts Manager, Joe Aguavilla. At the outset of this ordeal, the original repairman, Tim, said that MB of BR was difficult for him to deal with. Specifically, they wouldn't sell him parts that they had on hand. They would only order them (2-3 days delivery). After receiving the diagnostic report, my father sent Joe an email. Joe insisted on my father calling him to talk through the issues, while my father insisted on putting it in an email. We wanted to have everything in writing for obvious reasons. When Joe finally told my father that the car *wasn't allowed to be fixed by his shop*, due solely to the fact that he felt "my father didn't trust him enough to have another repairman (Tim) evaluate the car following their diagnostics report", we had no choice but to use Tim. Joe's last email stated that my father's method of reviewing the situation (he called it "trust") was offending his pride and /or reputation of his dealership. However, if one were only to go by the online reviews of MB of Baton Rouge and had no other information to go by except their communication with Joe, then they would never opt for an expensive procedure attempted by Mercedes of BR. Both his demeanor and tactics of evasion coupled with the bad online reviews, were the basis for my father's decision to advise me to let the other technician do the work.

So I had it towed back to Tim, and he was able to get everything replaced and fixed, but the AC still wouldn't switch on, so he said I should take it back to MB to have it diagnosed. Since my experience with MB of BR was so awful and they refused to work on my car, I drove it all the way back to Houston (with no AC) and took it to MB of Houston on 7/6. This was over the 4th of July weekend, so I had to forego my \$200 airline ticket home from AR to Houston, and drove with my mom over 7 hours (which turned into 12 because of horrible storms) to Baton Rouge to pick up the car. During that whole ordeal, I had to pay for two tows, get a rental car (and pay the \$100 one-way drop-off fee), hotel room (>\$100), and of course pay for gas/food for those trips.

Once I got to MB of Houston, the experience was a little more pleasant, however, I still have serious issues. They diagnosed the car and told me it needed ANOTHER \$3,620 of repairs done. They say the front SAM control module is completely bad and needs to be replaced and the intake manifold flap is coming apart. However, they said that even after they replace the SAM module, they aren't sure if the AC will be fixed or not. My first question is why did none of this show up on the MB of BR diagnostic report? Did they not check the front SAM for defects? From the time MB of BR diagnosed it and the time MB of Houston diagnosed it, I only drove a couple hundred miles. Why is there such a discrepancy between reports? Secondly, I had to ask for the diagnostic report to be emailed to me five times before I finally received it almost a week after I'd asked for it. Thirdly, I'm not able to get a clear answer from anyone at MB of

Houston on what will happen if the SAM module is replaced, but the AC still won't turn on. Will I still be charged for the SAM module? Can I keep my old SAM module? What if it's a wiring harness issue that needs to be replaced after they put in a new SAM module? How much will that be? The reason I have so many questions is because I just don't see how my entire SAM console is "bad". The car has no other symptoms of anything else not working. No warning lights, no error messages, etc. If the entire SAM module was bad, wouldn't the car show some other signs and symptoms? Can't the wire from the SAM to the compressor be checked first rather than putting in a whole new SAM module? Lastly, I'm frustrated with the time it takes to get answers and the amount of times I've had to repeatedly ask for something. For example, I've asked for the diagnostic report from MB Houston to be emailed to me at least four times now.

I'm having a hard time understanding which things were the causes and which were the effects. Can a bad SAM cause all of this damage? If it's not a bad SAM, can a bad wiring harness cause all this damage? If it was a bad AC compressor clutch, can it cause the SAM and/or the wiring harness to go bad? If the answer to any of these questions is yes, then it's obvious that there's an engineering flaw. If any one faulty component did THAT much damage, it's a horribly flawed system. When MB of Houston called to explain the repairs to be done to the SAM, Steve said that this part is faulty on a lot of SLKs. I asked why it hadn't been recalled and he said since it wasn't a safety issue, it hadn't been recalled yet, but may be in the future. How on earth is this not a safety issue when it causes such things as the power steering to go out on a car while driving 75 mph on a major interstate?

I ended up deciding to replace the SAM, for around \$1400. I drove the car about 20 miles and then the check engine light came on and the car was violently shaking. Once again, I was on an interstate in extremely unsafe conditions as a result of poor service on MB's part. This happened around 5:30pm and so I called MB of Houston North for help. None of the people answered their phones. I ended up selling my car THAT DAY and buying an Acura. Of course, I didn't get nearly as much as my car was worth because of the check engine light being on. However, since MB has proven to me that they don't care about their customers, I saw no other choice but to sell it immediately.

I would have thought a company like Mercedes-Benz would be more concerned about safety. When we were told by MB of Houston that "the SAMs in the SLKs frequently go bad and that's what caused my belt/compressor/pulleys to break" I asked why they haven't been recalled. I was told that this wasn't a safety issue. Could someone please explain how this is not a safety issue? I'm here to tell you, driving 70mph down I-10 (which, by the way, is the #22 most deadly interstate in the country, with about one death per mile in Louisiana) and having your power steering go out, AC go out in 100+ degree heat, and being stopped on the side of I-10 for an hour and a half is NOT safe. Because of this, I have filed a safety complaint about MB with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

I'm completely unsatisfied with the level of customer service I've received. For example, I had to ask five times for an email of the diagnostic report and turns out they were sending it to the wrong email address (on all my paperwork, I'd written my email address as [REDACTED] and they'd sent it to [REDACTED]). I submitted a customer service complaint online and a woman, who was supposedly a manager, from headquarters called me to discuss MB possibly helping with the cost of repair. She was very rude and cold and didn't care to listen to my story and complaints. She kept saying that I wasn't a "loyal MB customer" and that MB wasn't responsible for how the MB of BR and Houston treated me; BR had the right to deny my service.

This whole process has been an absolute nightmare. Over the past two months, I've spent well over \$7,000 already on this ordeal and countless hours on the phone dealing with it, not to mention all the time I've had to take off work. It's absolutely absurd to be putting this much money into a 2009 luxury vehicle. I'm shocked at the quality of the customer service of a "luxury vehicle" company. I honestly expected way more from MB. MB claims to deliver "the best or nothing: the highest quality service in the industry", which I've certainly not experienced. When I purchased my car in 2011, I fully intended on having a Mercedes-Benz for the rest of my life. However, after my experiences of the past month, there's no way I would ever buy a Mercedes-Benz again. Right now, I see no other option but to sell the car as soon as I can. I have a large presence on social media (>3,000 followers on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn) and I will also warn family and friends of my awful experience if nothing is done to help remedy the situation. I plan on spreading my experience to my colleagues here at ConocoPhillips as well as my large network of people in the energy industry. In addition to Yelp and Google Reviews and posts on benzworld.org and other blogs, I intend on submitting my

story to Houston TV consumer advocacy programs. I understand that you may not be able to help with all the aspects of my issue, so if you need to point me to someone else, please do.

Thank you so much for your time,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

JOE'S AUTO REPAIR
7040 Stella Link
Houston, TX. 77025
Phone: 713-662-0428

INVOICE

Org. Est. # 008759

INVOICE

Print Date: 06/08/2015

2009 Mercedes-Benz - SLK300 - 3L, V6 (183CI) VIN(Not A)

Lic #:

Odometer In : 79372

Cellular :

VIN #: WDBWK54F3 9F

Cust ID :

Part Description / Number	Qty	Sale	Ext	Labor Description	Extended
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Org. Estimate 1,939.84 Revisions 0.00 Current Estimate 1,939.84

Labor: 814.40
Parts: 1,039.67

Sub: 1,854.07
Tax: 85.77
Total: 1,939.84
Bal Due: \$0.00

[Payments - MasterCard - \$1,939.84]

I hereby authorize the above repair work to be done along with the necessary material and hereby grant you and/or your employees permission to operate the car or truck herein described on street, highways or elsewhere for the purpose to testing and/or inspection. An express mechanic's lien is hereby acknowledged on above car or truck to secure the amount of repairs thereto. Warranty on parts and labor is one years or 12,000 miles whichever comes first. Warranty work has to be performed in our shop & cannot exceed the original cost of repair.

Signature _____

Date _____

Time _____

3% 58²⁰ 1998⁰⁴

JOE'S AUTO REPAIR

7040 Stella Link
Houston, TX. 77025
Phone: 713-662-0428

INVOICE

Org. Est. # 008759

INVOICE

Print Date: 06/08/2015

2009 Mercedes-Benz - SLK300 - 3L, V6 (183CI) VIN(Not Av

Lic # : [REDACTED]

Odometer In : 79372

Cellular : [REDACTED]

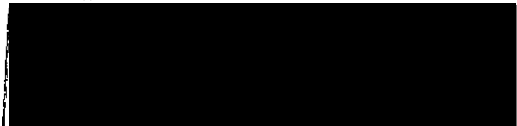
VIN # : WDBWK54F3 9F [REDACTED]

Cust ID : [REDACTED]

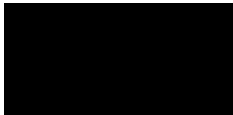
Part Description / Number	Qty	Sale	Ext	Labor Description	Extended
BRAKE PADS - Front,w/o Sport package 003 420 60 20	1.00	99.78	99.78	FLUSH BRAKE SYSTEM	96.00
BRAKE PADS - Rear,w/o Sport package 003 420 27 20	1.00	75.25	75.25	LUBE SERVICE	67.20
DISC ROTOR - Front,w/o Sport package 203 421 05 12	2.00	93.28	186.56	COOLING SYSTEM - Diagnosis - All Applicable Models - [Includes: Pressure test for leaks,inspect belts, hoses and test radiator cap.]	38.40
DISC ROTOR - Rear,w/o Sport package 203 423 01 12	2.00	61.65	123.30	LOF	5.00
BRAKE WARNING SENSOR - Each 211 540 17 17	2.00	10.41	20.82	EPA	3.00
AIR CLEANER ELEMENT - All Applicable Models 273 094 04 04	1.00	33.51	33.51	BRAKE PADS - Remove & Replace - Front - [Includes: Clean, lube and/or replace brake hardware as necessary. Adjust parking brake where necessary. DOES NOT include refinishing.]	96.00
CABIN AIR FILTER - Combination Filter 171 830 04 18	1.00	46.63	46.63	BRAKE PADS - Remove & Replace - Rear - [Includes: Clean, lube and/or replace brake hardware as necessary. Adjust parking brake where necessary. DOES NOT include refinishing.]	96.00
TRANSMISSION FLUID FLUID	2.00	72.61	145.22	CABIN AIR FILTER - Remove & Replace - All Applicable Models	48.00
TRANSMISSION OIL PAN - All Applicable Models 221 270 12 12	1.00	116.45	116.45	TRANSMISSION OIL PAN GASKET &/OR FILTER - Remove & Replace - All Applicable Models - [Includes: Additional time for use of scan tool to perform this procedure.]	172.80
BRAKE FLUID FLUID	1.00	15.00	15.00	SPARK PLUGS - Remove & Replace - All Applicable Models	192.00
OIL & FILTER SYNTHIC OIL SYN	1.00	59.95	59.95	NEED BOTH FRONT TIRES LEFT SIDE HAS BUBBLE	
SPARK PLUGS - Each 004 159 18 03	6.00	15.45	92.70		
Shop Supplies			24.50		

Sales Tax

85.77



[redacted]
Houston, TX



90241200
OCT 7 4 2015
SUSAN L. HARRIS
SUSAN L. HARRIS
SUSAN L. HARRIS

NORTH HOUSTON TX 773

06 OCT 2015 PM 3 L



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National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20590

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