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

Greenbrier, Arkansas

[redacted]

September 18, 2015

Case # [redacted]

SEP 29 2015

To Whom it May Concern:

I recently read the article involving Triumph motorcycles concerning safety defects in the steering of certain models. (NHTSA 42-15). I believe I have found one defect even much more serious as well as a cover up by the factory to hide this defect. In the data below, I will describe what I found and why I feel the factory not only knew about this defect, but covered it up.

I called recently to your office and received a case number. Case # [redacted] This case involves the front forks of my motorcycle. What I am going to explain is the defect I received in my motorcycle and what I believe is a factory cover up.

The Motorcycle

I purchased a 2011 Triumph GT Sprint motorcycle in October of 2012 from Eldorado Springs Cycle in Eldorado Springs, Missouri. Ser# SMT601PK4BJ[redacted]

The Problem

After closing the deal, I rode off on my new motorcycle. I had ridden only a few miles down the road. I noticed vibrations when I would use the front brake. I made a U-turn and went back to Eldorado Cycle.

The shop owner (now deceased) explained that this is normal for a new motorcycle. I said I have bought a lot of new motorcycles in my life and never had any vibrations when using the front brakes. The shop assured me this was normal for an ABS (Anti-Lock Braking System) and when the pads wore in, the vibrations would stop.

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Over the next year, the vibrations did not stop. In fact, the vibrations increased when I used my front brakes. I changed to new braking pads several times. I was now on my third new front tire. The shop in Eldorado Springs was now closed. Their dealership had been picked up by Springfield Power Sports in Springfield, Mo.

By the second season of riding (2014), these vibrations were now very bad. I could not use the front brakes in a curve. Or going down any hills. As an ex-professional racer, I was now involved in checking as much as I could.

I checked the proper setting of the head stock (neck) bearings. I checked the rotors for being out-of-round. I checked the rotors for being in the center of the braking calipers. I checked the calipers making sure they were in line with the rotors themselves. I checked the front wheel bearings. I could not find anything wrong with this motorcycle. Yet, the vibrations had now turned into a wobble when using the front brake.

I took my Triumph to the Springfield, Mo, shop in the fall of 2014. After leaving the motorcycle there for a week, they said the bike was fine. There was nothing wrong with it. I explained that this bike is still under warranty and I wanted this wobble fixed. They insisted that nothing was wrong. In disgust, I picked up my bike and left.

I then figured this shop knew exactly what was wrong with my bike. They also knew it could not be fixed. If they acknowledged the problem, they would have to take ownership to fix it. This way, just tell the customer "nothing is wrong".

I am thinking Triumph shops all over the USA have been doing this. Not letting any customer know about these front forks causing braking vibrations. To make any acknowledgement of this problem means a shop would have to fix it.

I continued to ride this motorcycle until the summer of 2015. I now considered it too dangerous to ride anymore. Something was radically wrong in the braking system. It was then I decided to take the front forks apart and see if I could find anything.

The Front Forks

The front forks used on a 1050 Triumph Sprint have been used since the new model Sprints starting in 2005. These are a Showa 43 mm cartridge type of front fork. After I removed these forks, I had them stripped down and ready to check.

Refer to my front fork diagram supplied.

When I took the chrome tube (no. 1) it wobbled around inside the lower slider tube (no 17). On both front forks. These two components should be very solid. The upper chrome tube should NEVER wobble around inside of the lower tube. This was causing the vibrations in my braking system all this time!!

Thinking I had a defective part somewhere, I then ordered a complete set of front fork parts. In the drawing, I ordered both #17 and #18 lower stanchion tubes and parts #12 thru #16 components. The cost was about

$900 thru a dealer in Iowa.

What I did was to reassemble everything with all the new parts. When I checked the wobble, it was exactly the same. Thru my own measuring, I found the upper guide bushing (#16) is within spec. But, the bore in the lower tube is too big!! On both my old tubes and these new tubes. I now have 4 different lower stanchion tubes all over-bored exactly the same!!

With the new parts coming in with the same over-bore as my 4 year old parts, I suspect that every single tube on every Triumph has this same problem. And, there is NO WAY to fix this!! Buying new parts will yield the exact same wobble.

The Cover Up

I believe that Triumph knew about this issue clear back to 2005. The reason I say this is the spacers in the front wheel. On any previous Triumph model, the total gap of the spacers and front wheel when installing this assembly between the two front forks is just a few thousands of an inch. If this gap is greater, it will pinch the fork tubes at the bottom and cause distortion.

On my wheel diagram I supplied, you can see the two wheel spacers. Part # 9 and # 10. These spacers are used on every 1050 Triumph with ABS braking. The gap I measured is around .060" of an inch. This is just too much gap to close up. It will severely pinch the fork bottom stanchion tubes together.

My Conclusion

I feel Triumph motorcycles knew about these bad front forks. They covered this up with an excessive amount of clearance on the front wheel spacers. When tightening the axle, this pinches the entire fork system together to try to reduce the wobble and vibrations caused by the incorrect tolerance of the front forks.

I made a .060" spacer for my Triumph. The idea was to allow the forks to remain parallel and not be pinched at the bottom. When I took the bike for a ride, it was near impossible to use the front brakes. The front wheel would bounce all over the highway near pulling the handlebars from my hands.

My Engineering fix

It is impossible to fix this situation. For any normal person, that is. Because I am an engineer, I can make a part that will bring the upper tube into spec making the upper and lower tubes now SOLID. Like they SHOULD be!! I then MUST install my .060" wheel bushing or I will over-pinch the bottom of the front forks.

Showa

Showa is responsible for supplying defective parts to Triumph motorcycles in England. Triumph is guilty in knowing they had a problem, but covered it up with excessive spacing in the front wheel.

I feel Showa should supply a set of lower stanchion tubes with the correct bore to allow the bushing to tightly fit the forks. Then, a spacer shim must be installed (or a redesign of the existing spacers) or the forks will be severely pinched at the bottom.

Reporting this Issue

I have called the Triumph headquarters in Peach Tree City, Ga. I explained about this problem. The man on the phone said that my motorcycle was unique. There are no known issues with Showa front forks.

I then called Showa USA in Ohio. They would not even acknowledge my phone call. The lady on the phone said she worked in purchasing. When I asked to speak to an engineer or technician, she said there are none. There was no one at the place to even listen to my complaint.

My Plan

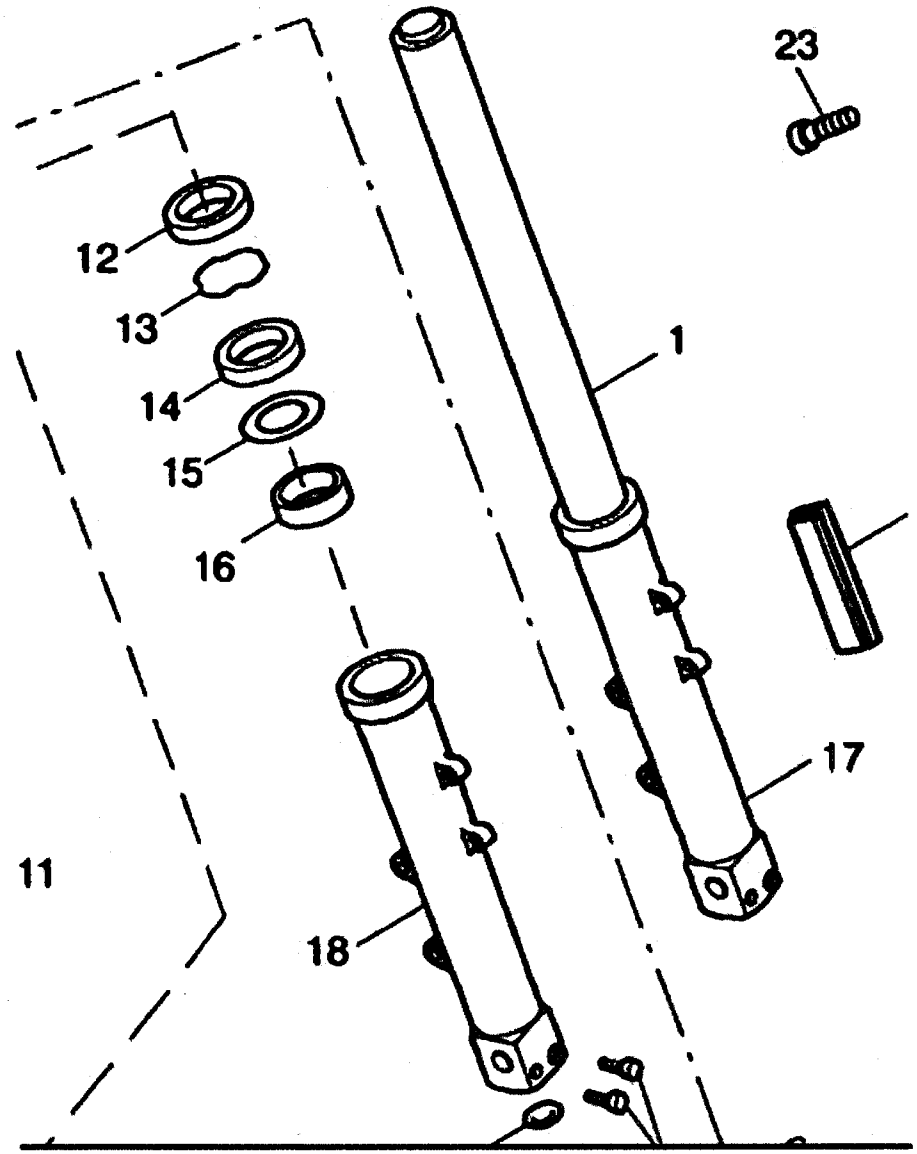
As my Triumph motorcycle sits right now, I have the wobbling forks still on the bike. I have the bottom pinched together like the bike was delivered to me. I KNOW how to fix my motorcycle. By this winter, if I do not hear anything from you, I will make my parts, install them, then have the ONLY Triumph Sprint that won't wobble when braking.

sincerely,

[redacted]

[redacted]

9-18-2015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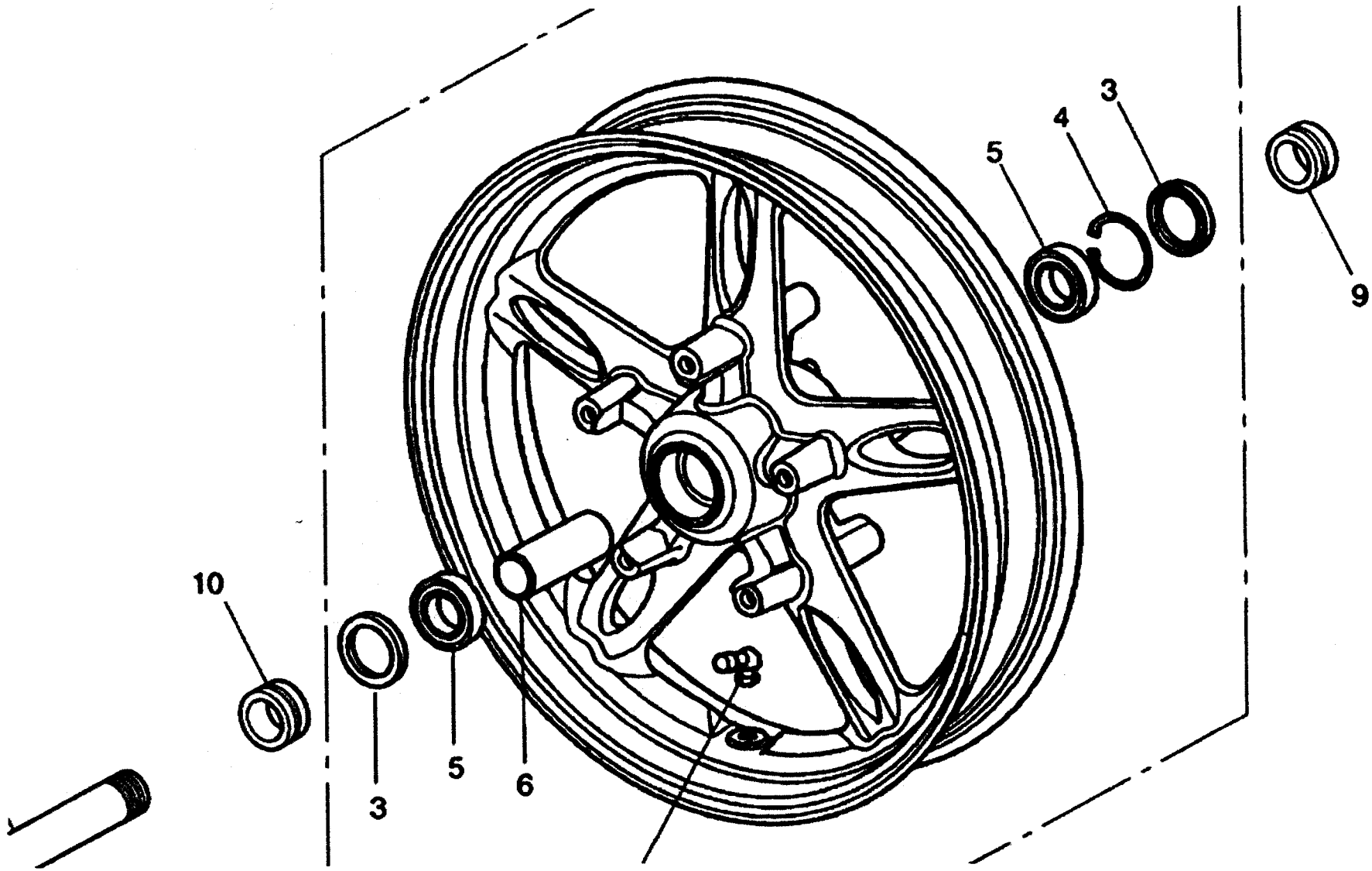
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