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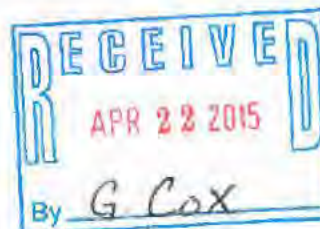
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★--Admitted NC & US Patent Bar (Inactive)

MEMORADUM OF REPORT OF UNSAFE PRODUCT

March 24, 2015

President

Western Products, a division of
Douglas Dynamics LLC of Milwaukee, WI
7777 North 73rd Street
Milwaukee, WI 53223
 2015 APR 11 A 9:11
 Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago

Subject: Home fire hazard created by faulty design of non-UL approved personal use snowplow for SUV manufactured by Western Products, a Division of Douglas Dynamics. Snow Plow Electric motor was unfused and over-heated when it did not respond to the "Command Controller" when it **shorted out** and caused an expensive and serious fire.

[1]

Dear Sir;

This is to advise you that I represent [REDACTED] of Highland Park, Illinois who had purchased and installed one of your snow plow products, a Western "SUBURBANITE" model, onto his 2002 year Ford Explorer SUV.

Background: The advent of the now common usage of SUVs in suburban areas has brought personal use snowplows as a consumer product as vehicle accessories. [REDACTED] of Highland Park, Illinois purchased and used one of these devices for plowing snow from his residential driveway. Western Products, a division of Douglas Dynamics LLC of Milwaukee, Wisconsin markets to individual consumers a plow that attaches to the front of the SUV. The product is advertised as an "on and off in a snap" and can be installed by one person without tools. The product is represented as having "joystick" control allowing for effortless completion of the desired task. The particular unit that is the subject of this complaint by [REDACTED] has a "Command Controller" module with buttons directing the positions of the plow (and power on and off) rather than a "joy stick". This "Command Controller" unit is used to regulate all the positions of the plow and to turning the unit on or off. A recent examination of the product reveals that it is not UL approved and has no protection against over-heating or other malfunction [2].

Product Safety Situation: Underwriter's Laboratory Approval is essential when products

requiring electronically controlled operation are sold to the general public for residential usage. This snow plow assembly while intended to be used non commercially by members of the public as an add SUV accessory in addition to not being UL Approved has no automatic shut off or relay that activates in the event of an emergency situation or as a protection against over-heating or other malfunction. A failure of the "**Command Controller**" device as herein occurred has serious potentials for serious injury, property loss or even death. In the instant situation that is reported herein the shorted out, malfunctioning "**Command Controller**" device failed by ignoring the command to shut off and the 12 volt electric motor caught fire.

Instant Hazardous situation:

On or about February 2, 2015, fortuitously when [REDACTED] finished his task or plowing snow from his driveway, he for reasons unknown changed his pattern of conduct. Instead of pulling the vehicle in the attached garage of his home as a prelude to removing the plow from the vehicle he pressed the button on the "**Command Controller**" to shut off the snow plow unit, exited the vehicle and left the vehicle on the driveway. When he returned to it a few minutes later, he had a conflagration on the driveway as the 12 volt electric motor operating the plow burned itself and its adjacent area. The 12 volt main electric power cables module got so hot it melted both end sockets shut. Also, it burned both battery cables to the vehicle and to the plow battery. Had [REDACTED] driven the vehicle into the attached garage it is entirely probable that his home would have been damaged or destroyed by the fire that was should have been foreseeable to the manufacturer of the accessory. The manufacturer knew of should have known that the plow unit, when attached to a vehicle would be stored in a confined space and if the 12 volt electric motor continued to operate it would overheat and a fire would occur.

The conflagration that did occur was very hot and had a very dangerous potential to cause damage and possible loss of life. (Fortunately the only injury was to the unit itself because the plow was outside on the driveway.) The heavy snows that blanketed the United States this year placed foreseeable strain on equipment and caused plow equipment to be used for more than cosmetic purposes – great amounts of snow had to be removed from residents.

In [REDACTED] situation it appears that the snow plow "**Command Controller**" even though placed in the OFF position failed to deactivate the electric motor allowing it to overheat and ignite itself and its surroundings. Being left on the driveway the unit only self-destructed and did not ignite the dwelling. This report is sent to this Committee because of the potential for injury that [REDACTED] notes.

When [REDACTED] inquired in the Chicago suburban area with half a dozen snow plow service

centers, he discovered that Western Suburbanite Plow model has a design flaw that apparently was known to the manufacturer but was considered one of the risks that it (the manufacturer) was willing to take. The power unit motor and the "Command Controller" were not 'fused' and had no protection against over-heating to fire ignition stage or shut off to protect against injury to operator and vehicle in the event of malfunction. It appeared that this incident may not be an isolated event. At your company [REDACTED] spoke to David Fluery the next day.

Conclusion: A simple modification of the unit (i.e. a fuse or other device being installed) to prevent the relay from firing and overheating the electric motor) would prevent the possibility of a serious fire occurring in an attached garage or enclosed area that could result in not only property damage but loss of life. It is foreseeable that when a consumer shuts off the engine on his vehicle that the snow plow power motor would also terminate.

My recommendation is that you install a thermocouple on the 12 volt electric power motor itself so that if it reaches too high a temperature, an alarm would sound in the cab unit directing the driver to cease use of the unit or disconnect it until it cools properly.

At this time, my client is asking that you provide him with a new safe snow plow unit for his Ford Explorer SUV which has been retrofitted with appropriate safety features to prevent recurrence of the same problem, and you compensate him for his attorneys fees, time, trouble and repair expenses. The repair expenses were \$805.

While my client is quite upset at the burning of his snow plow, he does want to make it clear that the dealer, R. A. Adams Entreprises, Inc. Of McHenry, Illinois did in fact provide him with excellent customer care service during the repair process. Particularly, the service coordinator Mr. Steve Walker and also the repair mechanic were courteous, prompt and well informed.

Very Truly Yours,

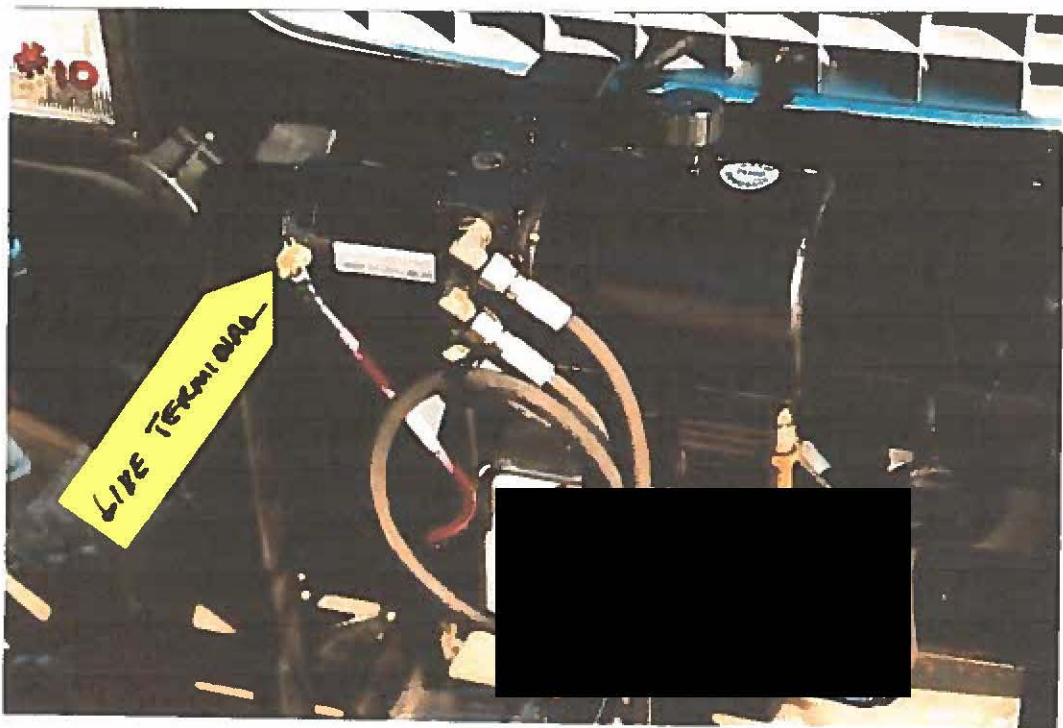
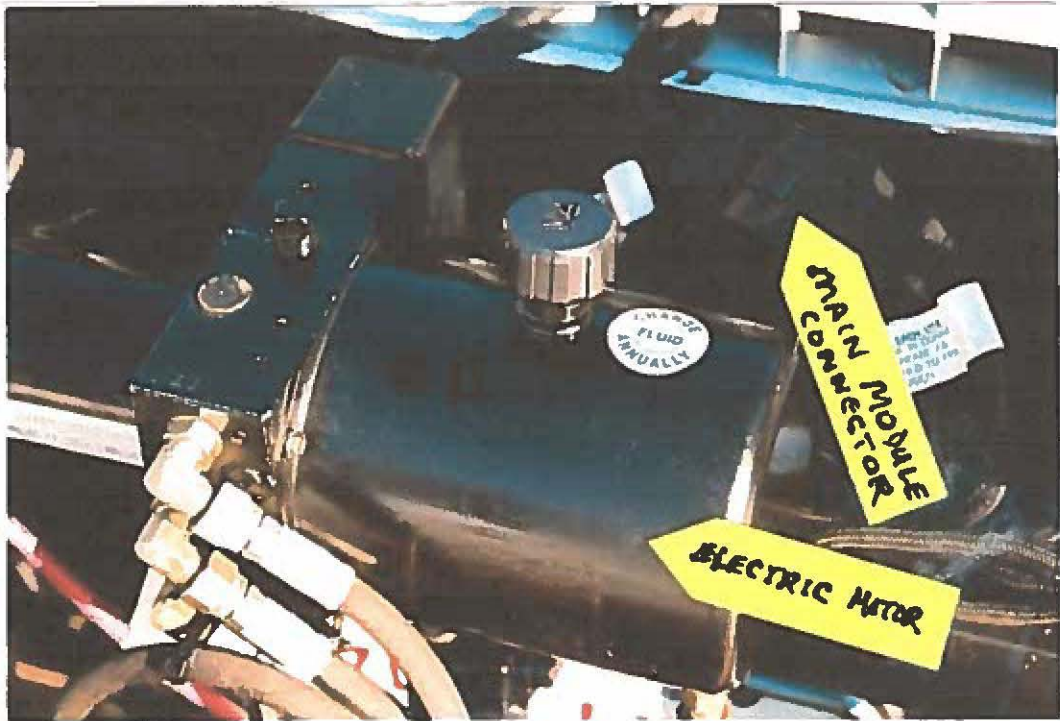
JoAnne Denison,
DENISON & ASSOCS, PC

[1] **SUBURBANITE** model

[2] It appears that the electrically shorted out malfunctioning "**Command Controller**" Part number is the same part number in both 2002 and 2015, indicating that the new part is just as dangerous and susceptible to fire and overheating as the original part was

cc: Consumer Product Safety Commission
4330 East West highway, Bethesda, MD 2091







COMMAND
CONTROLLER



#7



#8

