

U.S. Department
of Transportation

National Highway
Traffic Safety
Administration

**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 ☐

07-APR-2021

Reference No.
11406909

JUN 03 2021

OWNER INFORMATION (Type or Print)

Name

Address

City

CHAPEL HILL

State NC

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

4JGAB75E04

Make

MERCEDES BENZ

Model

ML500

Model Year

2004

Date Purchased

11/04/2003

Dealer's Name and Telephone Number

American Service Center

Engine:

No: Cylinders

Fuel Type:

Premium

Original Owner

☒

Dealer's City

Arlington

State

VA

Zip Code

22203

Transmission Type

Automatic

☒ Antilock Brakes

Powertrain

☒ Cruise Control

Multiple Failure:

Incident Date(s)

06-APR-2021

FAILED COMPONENT(S)/PART(S) INFORMATION

Vehicle Component Codes: 100000 POWER TRAIN, 010000 STEERING

Failure Mileage

248000

Failure Speed

35

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

Number of Deaths

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).

TL* THE CONTACT OWNS A 2004 MERCEDES-BENZ ML500. THE CONTACT STATED WHILE DRIVING 35 MPH, HE LOS CONTROL OF THE STEERING WHEEL. THE CONTACT STATED THAT THE STEERING WHEEL TURNED 360 DEGREES HOWEVER, THE WHEELS REMAINED IN A STRAIGHTFORWARD POSITION. THE CONTACT DEPRESSED THE BRAKE PEDAL AND THE VEHICLE TO DRIFTED TO THE SHOULDER OF THE ROAD. THE CONTACT STATED THAT SEVERAL UNKNOWN WARNING LIGHTS ILLUMINATED. THE VEHICLE WAS TOWED MERCEDES BENZ OF CARY (2400 AUTO PARK BLVD, CARY, NC 27511, 919-380-1800) BUT WAS NOT YET DIAGNOSED NOR REPAIRED. THE MANUFACTURE WAS NOT NOTIFIED OF THE FAILURE. THE FAILURE MILEAGE WAS 248,000.

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.

Chapel Hill, N. C.

May 19, 2021

U.S. Department of Transportation
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
Office of Defects Investigation, NEF-'00
1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E.
Washington, D.C. 20077-9382

Reference No. 11406909

Dear Sir/Madam:

First, thank you for taking the time to investigate the referenced incident which could, under different conditions, have had tragic and/or fatal consequences. I have been a licensed driver since 1957, age [REDACTED] and since that time have driven millions of miles in cars (new, old, and antique), school buses, small trucks, and military vehicles here in the United States and in other countries. I even taught drivers education in 1962. And never during my driving years have I experienced or considered I would experience the incident that happened to my wife and me on April 6, 2021, on Barbee Chapel Road in Durham County, North Carolina.

Specifically, my vehicle became instantly and totally un-steerable and uncontrollable. The steering wheel instantly and totally became untethered from any and all mechanisms that would guide the vehicle. "Thank God the brakes worked" and the vehicle drifted to the side of the road. I was able to completely stop the vehicle prior to continuing into a roadside ditch.

Now just imagine this incident happening at highway speeds, in the dead of night, with traffic all around or with no traffic at all for that matter. I am certain the incident would have ended much differently despite my experience. I thank God my wife was not driving. It is imperative that the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Daimler AG, and Mercedes-Benz USA jointly investigate and understand the cause of this incident and put in fixes to ensure a similar incident never, ever happens to other owners or lease holders.

My wife and I have owned Mercedes-Benz automobiles since the 1980s – all purchased new. In fact, we also own a 2007 S550 in addition to the 2004 ML500 which is the subject of this incident. Additionally, only authorized Mercedes-Benz dealer mechanics have ever worked on a Mercedes-Benz owned by my wife and me. Over the years we have paid thousands of dollars to have our vehicles serviced but felt it worth the investment. Of course, we are having second thoughts despite the fact Mercedes-Benz of Cary repaired our ML500 at no cost (see enclosed invoice).

Sincerely,

Enclosure

CUSTOMER #:

MERCEDES-BENZ OF CARY



2400 Auto Park Blvd. - Cary, NC 27511

(919) 380-1800

FAX (919) 460-3017

MercedesBenz.Cary.service@leithcars.com

INVOICE

PAGE 1

CHAPET HILL NC

HOME: [REDACTED] CONT: [REDACTED]

BUS: [REDACTED] CELL: [REDACTED]

SERVICE ADVISOR: 8679 HEIDI COYLE

COLOR	YEAR	MAKE/MODEL	VIN	LICENSE	MILEAGE IN/ OUT	TAG	
BLACK	04	MERCEDES-BENZ ML500	4JGAB75E04A		248660/248660	TH5143	
DEL DATE	PROD. DATE	WARR. EXP.	PROMISED	PO NO.	RATE	PAYMENT	INV. DATE
28NOV03 DL			17:00 07APR21		160.00	CASH	08APR21
R.O. OPENED		READY	OPTIONS:	DLR:	ENG:5.0 Liter		

07:52 07APR21 12:43 08APR21

LINE	OPCODE	TECH	TYPE	HOURS	LIST	NET	TOTAL
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A GUEST STATES PERFORM MULTI-POINT INSPECTION

M-MPI GUEST STATES PERFORM MULTI-POINT INSPECTION

5139 CM4

0.00

0.00

PARTS: 0.00 LABOR: 0.00 OTHER: 0.00 TOTAL LINE A: 0.00

B GUEST STATES WHILE DRIVING ON THE HIGHWAY THERE WAS A SNAP SOUND AND

GUEST CAN NOT STEER VEHICLE.

GS GUEST STATES WHILE DRIVING ON THE HIGHWAY

THERE WAS A SNAP SOUND AND GUEST CAN NOT

STEER VEHICLE.

5139IMPOL

(N/C)

1 163-460-02-49 CONTACT PIECE

(N/C)

PARTS: 0.00 LABOR: 0.00 OTHER: 0.00 TOTAL LINE B: 0.00

,,,248660 found steering shaft loose, resecured steering shaft,

,,,replaced steering angle sensor, cleared codes, road tested

C CAR TOWED IN -- SEE SUBLET CHARGES IF APPLICABLE. - NO STEERING

M-TOW CAR TOWED IN -- SEE SUBLET CHARGES IF

APPLICABLE. - NO STEERING

5139 CM4

0.00

0.00

PARTS: 0.00 LABOR: 0.00 OTHER: 0.00 TOTAL LINE C: 0.00

EST: 180.80

07APR21 07:52 SA: 8679

CONTACT:

The factory warranty constitutes all of the warranties with respect to the sale of this item/items. The Seller hereby expressly disclaims all warranties either express or implied, including any implied warranty of merchantability or fitness for a particular purpose, and the Seller neither assumes nor authorizes any other person to assume for it any liability in connection with the sale of this item/items.

"By providing a telephone number, you warrant that you are the current owner/subscriber/customer/user of the phone number provided (or are otherwise authorized to provide consent to be contacted at the number provided), and you authorize manufacturer, dealer and their agents and/or independent contractors to contact you at the number provided regarding your vehicle. Such contact may include (but is not limited to) automated or prerecorded maintenance reminders, warranty, and/or pre-service scheduling and post-service confirmation, lease and extended warranty information notices, recall notifications, customer satisfaction surveys, and/or satisfaction calls or texts, which may be sent via automated dialing system. You may receive up to one marketing type message per month. Standard voice, data, and message rates may apply. You opt out of any text messages sent to you by replying STOP to the message received."

NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR LOSS OR DAMAGE TO CARS OR ARTICLES LEFT IN CARS IN CASE OF FIRE, THEFT OR ANY OTHER CAUSE BEYOND OUR CONTROL.

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 streets, highways or elsewhere for the purpose of testing and/or inspection. An express mechanic's lien is hereby acknowledged on above car or truck to secure the amount of repairs thereto.

X

I HEREBY AUTHORIZE ANY ADDITIONAL NEEDED ADD ON WARRANTY REPAIRS

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CUSTOMER COPY

DESCRIPTION	TOTALS
LABOR AMOUNT	0.00
PARTS AMOUNT	0.00
GAS, OIL, LUBE	0.00
SUBLET AMOUNT	0.00
MISC. CHARGES	0.00
TOTAL CHARGES	0.00
LESS INSURANCE	0.00
SALES TAX	0.00
PLEASE PAY THIS AMOUNT	0.00