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

[redacted]
[redacted]
Altha, FL [redacted]
[redacted]
[redacted]
VIN [redacted]
3 July 2021 / 70,000 miles

Administrator
NHTSA
1200 New Jersey Avenue
West Building
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Sir,

Please see below letter for your awareness that I have sent to FCA US LLC Customer Service regarding the brake system issues and concern I have been experiencing with my vehicle.

I am writing to express my concern and issues and seek your service for correcting what I believe to be a latent brake system safety defect on my 2021 3500 HD Ram pick-up truck.

Since taking delivery of this vehicle as the original owner, I have been skeptical of the brake system feel and performance not being quite what I would expect from a new, heavy duty pick-up truck. I have driven other similar vehicles including Ram brand pick-up trucks and this one has always had a soft and long brake pedal feel and travel respectively, with questionable performance that I feel is uncharacteristic of this type of vehicle. Although the brake system feel has always been somewhat of a concern, the brake performance has been seemingly adequate under normal driving and/or unloaded conditions, so I have always believed. Early on after taking delivery of the truck, I responded to an inquiry type survey from Mopar/FCA through a third-party company and I expressed my concern in detail (writing) regarding the uncharacteristically brake pedal feel and indicated as offered in the survey to be contacted by someone from the manufacturer to discuss further. No response and/or known attempt to contact me has ever been made.

Not long after vehicle break-in, I began to use the truck for towing as intended, at near capacity, and experienced a few times where aggressive braking was required while driving in traffic and on more than one occasion over the course of a year or so, it became somewhat concerning if the brake system was up to its rated potential. I had experienced at least one situation where I had to apply the brake and push the pedal to the floorboard (or end of travel) to bring the truck and trailer to a stop without hitting the vehicles in front. Fortunately, the trailer brakes were always functional and knowing what I have recently learned (explained below) I don't feel as though the truck's brakes were functioning at full capacity or potential. At this time, I began to question the adequacy of the brake system and started to research and try to diagnose the braking system and performance on this truck.

During the first year of ownership, I had to have some engine warranty work and body work (animal wildlife impact/non brake related) performed at Bay Cars in Panama City, FL. One time afterward while at the dealership to address an issue after the body work was completed, I also inquired

about the brake pedal feel and was told that it was normal for these trucks with the gasoline engines. I later researched this brake concern online and found some information from Star Online Publication with a case number of [redacted] and a "System/Vehicle Issue: HD Truck Brake Pedal Feel On Gas Engine Equipped". I am not sure how valid this document is, but the Customer Complaint/Technician Observation portion of the document is exactly what I have experienced with this truck. A soft brake pedal feel and excessive or long brake pedal travel (before the pedal becomes firm and begins applying brake pressure). Additionally, the document also states the vehicle has no issue stopping or controlling the vehicle. I believed this to be true, especially when driving with no cargo load being carried and/or towed, but now believe that the braking performance has not been functioning up to its full rated potential/capacity. I now believe that the vehicles brake performance/function is less than the vehicles rated design capacity when operating the vehicle "normally", whether unloaded or loaded, and especially at or near full cargo carrying and/or towing capacity.

In March of 2024, after having new tires installed at a Firestone store in Marianna, FL, I took the truck to Key Chrysler Dodge Jeep Ram of Marianna, in Marianna, FL to again inquire about the skeptical brake system and experienced performance and again was basically told the same thing as before. This is typical for these trucks with the gasoline engines. During this visit, the service department was closed, and I had spoken with a salesman. The salesman told me that he was aware of the complaint and had previously personally owned a similar truck with the gasoline engine and experienced the same thing. He assured me that there is nothing wrong with the vehicle and there is no recommended manufacturer fix either.

Since that last visit and over the course of the next year, still being skeptical and somewhat concerned with the brake system, I happened to realize a quirk of the vehicle's brake system. One day while driving, I was in a braking situation that required a significant brake application which I applied, firm and steady, with the soft feel and long stroke of the brake pedal preceding the firming up and braking action being felt. I then released the brake pedal thinking I was going to accelerate and quickly had to reapply the brakes almost immediately and I then realized that the brake pedal did not feel soft, the brake pedal travel was shortened, and the braking action was significantly improved and more aggressive. My style of driving has never involved pumping or releasing and reapplying the brakes during routine braking. I have always used a single steady brake pressure during slowing and stopping.

To make a long story short, I came to realize that when braking now, if you apply the brake and quickly release and reapply the brake, the pedal feel, travel and braking performance is significantly improved. So much improved that I have since adopted this "method" of braking when driving this truck now. I have further realized that you do not have to fully apply the brakes, release and reapply, you just need to simply "short stroke" the brake pedal (push brake pedal to point just short of brake application and release) before fully applying the brakes and the pedal is firmer with less travel and significantly improved braking action is provided. The issue here is, I am confident that this is not the way the truck was engineered to be operated, as there is obviously no mention of it in the owner's manual. This adopted method of braking should not be required to gain the full potential of the brake system.

I have returned to Key Chrysler Dodge Jeep Ram of Marianna in March of 2025 to again inquire about the "System/Vehicle Issue and Customer Complaint/Technician Observation" brake system issue and seek if any further information has been developed regarding a safety recall and/or service bulletin. The service department was unaware of any such complaint or issue and provided a dealer service report that indicates no recall and/or service bulletin issued for this vehicle regarding brake system issues. They also provided "Service Library" reference material that suggests a spongy pedal and/or low pedal may be caused by air in the system or worn brake components. I do not feel that these indicated faulty conditions/components are cause for the brake issue being experienced because the vehicle is all factory original as delivered except for routine service and the aforementioned engine warranty repair and body repair work. The brake system has never been serviced, repaired or altered in any way. Furthermore, it appears that most of the braking action is being provided primarily by one axle, which I think is the front axle because the rear brakes have considerably less wear in comparison to the front, which I believe is more so than what would be expected on a properly functioning system. When applying the brakes now using the "adopted braking method", it is apparent that the braking action is significantly increased, likely due to both axles providing full braking force.

To summarize, I believe the brake function issues experienced and described herein are a valid concern for the expected performance and operational safety of the vehicle and is thought to be a latent defect. I am seeking your service in addressing this issue. As described previously, the brake performance may have seemed adequate under normal driving and/or unloaded vehicle conditions but is now realized to be not acceptable and up to the standard for the vehicle's rated capacity as evidenced by the "adopted braking method" that is known to provide significantly improved braking feel and performance. This adopted braking method is not normal for the safe and efficient operation of the vehicle.

I ask that you please consider my request to analyze my concerns and issues experienced for providing a corrective action for the brake performance and safety issue(s) described herein.

I am also providing a copy of this letter to the NHTSA as recommended in the owner's manual.

Thank you for your anticipated attention to this matter as I look forward to hearing from you and finding/accepting a suitable resolution.

Sincerely,

[redacted]

[redacted]

PENSACOLA FL 325
18 AUG 2025 AM 2 L

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Administrator, NHTSA
1200 New Jersey Avenue
West Building
Washington, D.C. 20590

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