Form Approved: O.M.B. No. 2127-0008

U.S. Department of Transportation
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

DOT Auto Safety Hotline
Vehicle Owner's Questionnaire
TO REPORT VEHICLE SAFETY DEFECTS
1-888-DASH-2-DOT
(1-888-327-4236)
INTERNET: www.nhtsa.dot.gov/hotline

Posted

COPIED

RECEIVED
00 JUL 31 PM 2:34
DEFECTS INVESTIGATION
OFFICE

FOR AGENCY USE ONLY

Date Received

Odi or
Crash
ODI
up_ltr

Reference No.
553295

OWNER INFORMATION (Type or Print)

[redacted]

Daytime Telephone [redacted]

Do you authorize NHTSA to provide a copy of this report to the manufacturer of your vehicle? ☒ YES ☐ NO
In the absence of an authorization, NHTSA WILL NOT provide your name or address to the vehicle manufacturer.

Signature of Owner [redacted] Date 7/20/2000

PRODUCT INFORMATION

Vehicle Identification No. (VIN.) (17 Digits) (Located at bottom of windshield on driver's side)	Make	Model	Year
1G2NE12E5XM825836	Pontiac	Grand Am	1999

Purchased Date: Nov. 1999 ☐ New ☐ Used
Dealer's Name: Lewis Motor Co.
Dealer's City: Crystal City State: Mo. Zip Code: 63019
Engine Size (CID/CC/L): No. Cylinders: 6 ☐ Turbo ☐ Diesel ☒ Gas ☐ Fuel Injection

Manufacture Date (on driver's door or pillar): Car is Totalled!

Transmission Type: ☐ Manual ☒ Automatic

Restraint System: ☒ Driverside Air Bag ☐ Motorbelt ☒ Passengerside Air Bag ☐ 2-Point Belt ☒ 3-Point Belt

Cruise Control: ☒ Yes ☐ No

Drivetrain: ☒ Front ☐ Rear ☐ 4-Wheel

Vehicle Type: ☒ Car ☐ Sport Utility ☐ Van ☐ Truck ☐ Minivan ☐ Motorcycle ☐ Other

Body Style: ☒ 2-Door ☐ 4-Door ☐ Stationwagen ☐ Pick Up Truck ☐ Other

FAILED COMPONENT(S)/PART(S) INFORMATION

Part Name(s): Rear Lateral Link bolt separated (enclosed report)

Location: ☒ Left ☐ Right ☐ Front ☐ Rear

Failed Part(s): ☒ Original ☐ Replacement

Handicap Adaptive Equip: ☐ Yes ☒ No

TO BE COMPLETED WHEN REPORTING A TIRE FAILURE

Tire Brand	Tire Name	Complete Tire Size

No. of Failures:
Date(s) of Failure(s):
Mileage at Failure(s):
Vehicle Speed at Failure(s):
Failed Part(s) Available? ☐ Yes ☐ No
NHTSA Previously Contacted? ☐ Yes ☐ No

APPLICABLE INCIDENT INFORMATION

(Please describe in detail the Incident(s), Failure(s), Crash(es), and Injury(ies). Attach photos if available.)

Crash	Fire	Number of Persons Injured	Number of Fatalities	Reported to Manufacturer
☒ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☒ No	1	0	☒ Yes ☐ No

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

Car pulled to right, driver corrected, repeated 2 more times. Driver could not correct on the 4th time. Car ran off road, hit a culvert pipe, went airborne, nose dived, flipped & slid on top of car. Driver received cuts & bruises & a cracked T-12 vertebrae. Driver is unable to participate in sports (Volleyball & basketball) at the present time. No running, lifting, jumping or contact sports. No Mopping, sweeping, etc. in her job.

Continue on back.

Mail postage free or fax to 202-366-7882

Westwood
Automotive Inc.

www.westwood-auto.com

13458 Big Bend Rd.
Kirkwood Mo. 63122
(636) 225-8500
(636) 225-7226 Fax

June 12, 2000

STATE FARM INVESTIGATION
DANA DONAVAN

POSSIBLE MECHANICAL FAILURE

VEHICLE: 1999 PONTIAC GRAND AM SE

INSPECTED SUSPENSION AND STEERING COLUMN:
Noted that for some reason, the steering wheel turns without a key in the ignition. The ignition key and tumbler does not mount in the steering column on this model. Why the steering wheel turns with out a key is unknown.

Verified that the steering components are intact with the steering wheel. Some components damaged due to the accident. The left knuckle for the front is broken and separated. The left front axle is pulled apart. However steering components are intact.

Inspected rear suspension. Right side rear suspension in bent but intact in all 4 anchor points. The rear lower control link is bent. All bolts are in place.

The left rear suspension shows plausible reason to suspect that the lower control arm came loose. The left strut and control arms are completely separated. The forward torque rod and bushing is twisted but otherwise intact.

It is obvious that the strut was severed due to the impact and possibly due to the lower control arm separation. The lower control arms, also known as lateral links, control the position of the rear suspension. The lateral links connect to the rear sub-frame at the inboard joint, then connect to the wheel hub and knuckle assembly. The links are attached to the knuckle with a single 12 mm diameter bolt approximately 10 inches long. The bolt is secured with a locking nut. The attaching bolt is mounted through the rear lateral link, then the knuckle housing then through the forward lateral link. The bolt is then applied to the forward side of the suspension links.

It appears as though the lock nut may have been separated from the attaching bolt.

As the attaching bolt slid out of it's mounting, the forward lateral link would separate from the suspension first.

This separation would cause the left rear wheel to turn outward to the left (extreme negative toe). The effect of this outward movement would steer the rear of the car to the left causing the sensation of a sudden right steer to the front of the car.

The owner stated that the car suddenly veered to the right two or three times.

It is possible that as the left rear wheel turned outward, the driver would instinctively turn the vehicle to the left to correct the sudden change in vehicle pitch. The corrective steering effort could also cause the left rear wheel to change direction for a short time period.

As the bolt continued to move to the rear, the tension on the rear lateral link would be increased, and as the wheel and tire moved outward the bolt would bend allowing it to pull free from the wheel assembly. The owner would attempt to correct the outward left swing of the car by again steering the front of the car to the left.

Finally, the threaded end of the attaching bolt would make contact with the rear bolt hole of the knuckle. As the force of the separation increased the bolt, bound up in the knuckle and rear lateral link, would leave behind an imprint of the threads in the rear bushing.

We found the imprint clearly visible in the rear lateral link outer bushing insert. The lateral link is bent severely at the outer attaching bushing which probably occurred during the final outward movement of the left rear wheel just before separation.

Once the wheel and knuckle separated from both lateral links, the links would tend to drag or scrape on the road surface.

Both lateral links show drag marks that indicate asphalt or concrete scraping. However, the rest of the vehicle's components show dirt, rocks and grass.

The strut assembly and forward link are destroyed. The forward link is twisted approximately 3 times. No other suspension components exhibited as much damage as the left rear components.

This indicates to us that these components were separated for the longest period of time.

Other indications of bolt separation before impact is based on past experience with our own body shop.

We have had many GM vehicles with this damage to the left and right lateral link suspensions. Some of these vehicles were total loss vehicles and other simply folded the rear links up like retractable aircraft landing gear. However, I can not recall any of these vehicles breaking the attaching bolt or severing the attaching bolt off.

As an example, the right rear suspension shows impacts that bent the lateral links. However, the bolt is not missing.

The left suspension shows no parts of a broken bolt or any other attachment nut. It is our assessment that the bolt is missing because it became separated before the accident. The fact that the bolt thread is imprinted on the rear bushing insert and that the lateral links have ground out against the road surface when the vehicle obviously left the road surface support these findings.

SUMMARY:
The rear lateral link bolt separated causing left outward movement of the left rear wheel. Corrections to the front suspension to control the sudden right turn sensation worked the left rear wheel back and forth until the bolt completely separated. The vehicle lost control on a hard road surface scraping the lateral links along the surface before it left the roadway. It appears that the vehicle rolled at least once completely once it left the road surface.

If I can be of further assistance regarding this matter please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Ken Wash
ASE Certified Technician

KW/jf