



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

**AUTO SAFETY HOTLINE
VEHICLE OWNER'S QUESTIONNAIRE**

NATIONWIDE 1-800-424-9393
DC METRO AREA 202-358-9113

POSTED

FOR AGENCY USE ONLY

DATE RECEIVED

01 JAN 16 PM 12:35

OFFICE
DEFECTS INVESTIGATION

REFERENCE NO.

558397

DAY TIME TELEPHONE

OWNER INFORMATION (TYPE OR PRINT)

NAME and ADDRESS

QC'd

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

DATE Dec. 14, 2000

VEHICLE INFORMATION

VEHICLE IDENTIFICATION NO.

1C4GP64L0XB567292

VEHICLE MAKE

Chrysler

VEHICLE MODEL

Town & Country
Limited Van

MODEL YEAR

1999

*LOCATED AT BOTTOM OF WINDSHIELD ON DRIVER'S SIDE

CURRENT ODOMETER READINGS

38,951

DATE

10/31/98

PURCHASED

☒ NEW ☐ USED

DEALER'S NAME, CITY & STATE

Central Auto Chrysler,
Plymouth, Jeep & Norwood, MA

ENGINE SIZE

(CID/CC/L)

NO. CYLINDERS 6

☐ TURBO

☐ DIESEL

☐ GAS

☒ FUEL INJECTN

TRANSMISSION TYPE

☐ MANUAL

☒ AUTOMATIC

ANTILOCK BRAKES

☒ YES

☐ NO

RESTRAINT SYSTEM

☒ DRIVERSIDE AIRBAG

☒ PASSENGERSIDE AIRBAG

☒ 3-POINT BELT

☐ 2-POINT BELT

☐ MOTORBELT

CRUISE CONTROL

☒ YES

☐ NO

DRIVETRAIN

☒ FRONT

☐ REAR

☐ 4-WHEEL

BODY STYLE

STAWAG

4 DR

2 DR

☒ HATCH BK

☒ VARD

☐ PK UP TRK

☐ OTHER

FAILED COMPONENT(S)/PART(S) INFORMATION (REPORT TIRE INFORMATION ON BACK)

COMPONENT

Chrome plated
rims & wheels

PART NAME(S)

LOCATION

☐ LEFT

☐ FRONT

☐ RIGHT

☐ REAR

FAILED PART(S)

☒ ORIGINAL

☐ REPLACEMENT

NO. OF FAILURES

3 out of 4
wheels

DATE(S) OF FAILURE(S)

see letter

MILEAGE AT FAILURE(S)

see letter

VEHICLE SPEED AT FAILURE(S)

N.A.

MANUFACTURER

CONTACTED

☒ YES ☐ NO

NHTSA PREVIOUSLY

CONTACTED

☐ YES ☒ NO

APPLICABLE ACCIDENT INFORMATION

ACCIDENT

☐ YES ☒ NO

FIRE

☐ YES ☒ NO

NUMBER PERSONS INJURED

N/A

NUMBER OF FATALITIES

N/A

PROPERTY

DAMAGE

ESTS N/A

POLICE REPORTED

☐ YES ☒ N/A ☐ NO

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION OF FAILURE(S), ACCIDENT(S), INJURY(IES)

See attached letter to Daimler Chrysler dated 12/5/00.

CONTINUE ON BACK IF NEEDED

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.

[REDACTED]

December 5, 2000

Daimler Chrysler Motors Corporation Customer Center
P.O. Box 21-8004
Auburn Hills, MI 48321-8004

Attn: Warranty Assistance

Gentlemen:

This letter is to detail a newly discovered problem concerning factory installed chrome wheels on my 1999 Town & Country "Limited" van. This, my 2nd letter within a week (!) to Chrysler, is to alert you to a serious safety problem.

Our van, purchased in October 1998 from Central Auto in Norwood, MA, was factory equipped with the multiple spoked, chrome plated, alloy wheels. After about six months we noticed that these wheels had lost their shine and were becoming pitted. In hindsight, we wish now that we had complained then. This past summer, after 19 months of service, we noticed that the passenger side rear tire was losing air, about 5 pounds per week. We have a good tire gage and began to check it frequently. Prior to our October 2000 trip to Hilton Head and Orlando, I took the van to my local service station to look at the slow leak. Finding no punctures or cuts, a rim sealer was put on the tire and we started our trip. At each gas fill up we checked this tire's pressure and compared the reading with the other three. The air loss was less rapid but not eliminated.

On our return home, I drove the van to Central Auto on Nov. 27th for its scheduled 30,000 mile service. I asked them to check the tire. Later in the day, I received a phone call suggesting that the wheel had been damaged (the inference was that I had hit a curb) and was told that the wheel could be replaced at a cost of \$675.00. Shocked at the price and feeling innocent of having caused any damage to this wheel, I said "No thanks" to a new wheel and decided to seek a second opinion.

On December 4, 2000, my husband kindly offered to spend a day on this problem and drove the van to Rim and Wheel Works, Inc. in Newton, MA. First the wheel was removed and checked for balance. It was perfect. The wheel was true and showed no dings or dents on the rim. Then they removed the tire and showed the inside of the wheel to my husband who is a metallurgist. He was flabbergasted at the sight of serious oxidation on the INSIDE of the rim. It was obvious that the air loss was related to the lack of a smooth surface with which the tire could mate.

The seal compound applied by the gas station serviceman had somewhat compensated for the badly pitted rim, but it was now clear that his solution for stopping the leak was wholly inadequate. The Rim & Wheel Works shop then pulled the other three wheels. Two of them were also badly pitted and very rough. They buffed the rims, remounted and balanced all 4 wheels at a cost to me of \$200.00. This too is a stop-gap solution. The shop said that chrome plated wheels should NOT be used in winter as the road salts destroy the plate. This suggests to me that chrome plated wheels should never be offered as an option for vehicles delivered to regions of the country such as New England that experience icy, snowy winters. In fact, I believe Chrysler should have recalled these wheels.

We have seen the tire problems that Firestone has just experienced. My contention is that the condition of my wheels could have resulted in **unexpected, sudden deflation** if the rim corrosion problem had gone much further. Speed limits are 70 MPH in the south. Had one of the tires failed at such speeds, our van would have crashed. I plan on bringing this safety issue to the attention of the National Transportation Safety Board as I believe that it could be as serious as the Firestone problem.

If you truly want

[REDACTED]

cc: NTSB
Central Auto Chrysler