



1-888-DASH-2-DOT

Vehicle Owner's Questionnaire

Office of Defects Investigation

559189

Click here to fill out the form using SSL (your information will be encrypted)

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

Please provide your name, address, and phone number, as well as specific details about your vehicle and the problems you encountered with it. We would like to have a telephone number where you can be reached or where we can leave a message. This is necessary to obtain more detailed information when required for our investigative efforts. You may want to have your owner's manual handy as you proceed through the several screens of the questionnaire. Required information is marked with *.

Owner Information

* First Name

* Last Name

Organization

* Address

Address

* City

Home Phone

Work Phone

Fax Number

Email Address

PLS. SEE LETTERS
ATTACHED DETAILING
SPARE TIRE ISSUE/
CONCERN.

COMMENTS?

Thanks!

The Privacy Act prevents release of owner information without prior authorization.

Do you wish to request a mailed signature form, which will authorize NHTSA to provide a copy of the owner information along with the vehicle information contained in this report to the manufacturer of your vehicle?

Yes ☒

Vehicle Information

17 digit Vehicle Identification Number (VIN):
(Located under windshield on driver's side dashboard)

1999 CHEV. VENTURE

January 24, 2001

Ms. Maureen Kempston Darkes
President & General Manager
General Motors Canada Ltd.
1908 Colonel Sam Drive
Oshawa, Ontario
L1H 8P7

Re: LIABILITY FOR DESIGN OF SPARE TIRE STORAGE SYSTEM →

Dear Ms. Kempston Darkes:

This is the second time I have written to you. The first was on February 8, 1999 to highlight a very satisfying new car buying experience at Briar Wood Chevrolet Oldsmobile Ltd. Unfortunately, this note cannot be in a similarly positive vein.

Yesterday I received a letter from GM Canada, dated November 2000, that attempts to "clarify the maintenance procedures that will ensure the [spare] tire is correctly stored". To me, this appears to be an attempt to shift future liability for a potentially very serious problem from GM Canada to the customer or vehicle owner.

This letter discusses how the spare tire could "fall off" the vehicle - in my case, a 1999 Venture van - through "lack of vehicle maintenance". I am sure that you will agree that a tire falling off my van could have severe implications in terms of impacting vehicles being driven behind my van, including accidents involving serious injury or death. Obviously, the last thing I want is to be liable for such eventualities. However, the letter unfairly, in my view, puts the onus on me to ensure that the spare tire is "stored securely" and that it does not ever suffer from "loss of air pressure". I am supposed to ascertain this "at least once a month [according to my] owner's manual".

So, once a month I am to get out the jack tools, extract the spare tire crank handle, crank down the spare, crawl partway under my van [and in all likelihood mess up my clothes], pull the spare out from under the van, lift it into the van, drive to a gas station to check/refill the air, drive back home, lift the spare out of the van, crawl with it back under the van, attempt to properly hook it up to the thin cable dangling underneath the van, crank the tire back into position, and finally repackage the crank/jack tools. Do you think it is reasonable to expect your customers to perform such an awkward, dirty, time-consuming ritual on a monthly basis? What percentage of your customers do you think will really do this every month? What happens if the spare tire's pressure falls between 'rituals'?

In addition, I am supposed to somehow ascertain that the spare is "securely stored" and that proper "cable tension is maintained" by trying to "push or pull and...rotate or turn" the spare. This is easier said than done. For many customers it will be quite difficult, if not impossible, to crawl under the vehicle and use a considerable [and undefined] amount of force to physically manipulate the tire. Is this a reasonable expectation?

The owner's manual recommends that the spare tire hoist cable be tightened to "two clicks", but the letter indicates that "it is not absolutely necessary to get two clicks". This lack of precision worries me. Exactly what is required for the spare tire to be secure?

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Is the issue potentially improper storage, or is it a poorly designed and potentially dangerous storage system? Why is the spare tire:

- located on the underside of the vehicle in a position where it is very difficult [if not impossible] to truly ensure secure long-term storage?
- located where it, the thin hoist cable and associated fittings are exposed to harsh elements such as road salt, and are at risk of being struck and perhaps loosened/dislodged by road debris?
- held by a cable that can "fatigue and ultimately break", causing the spare to fall onto the roadway and potentially cause a serious accident??

Other vehicle manufacturers have successfully designed spare tire storage into the inside of van beds or car trunks in a convenient, clean, accessible way that facilitates regular pressure checks and avoids the safety issues identified in this letter. Why not GM?

I look forward to a prompt response that makes it clear that I, as a customer and vehicle owner, will not be liable for any problems or potential accidents affecting me or anyone in the proximity of my vehicle resulting from the poorly designed spare tire storage system in 1999 Chevrolet Venture Vans.

Sincerely,



Copy: Mr. Rick MacIntosh
Briar Wood Chevrolet Oldsmobile Ltd.
321 Lakeshore Road West
Mississauga, Ontario L5H 1G9
Tel. 905-278-3365
Fax. 905-891-2313

Mr. Geno Castellarin
Dealer/Owner
Briar Wood Chevrolet Oldsmobile Ltd.



GENERAL MOTORS OF CANADA LIMITED
1908 COLONEL SAM DRIVE
OSHAWA, ONTARIO L1H 8P7

November 2000

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Dear General Motors Customer:

General Motors of Canada Limited would like to remind you about the importance of the SPARE TIRE storage system on your vehicle and to clarify the maintenance procedures that will ensure the tire is securely stored. Lack of vehicle maintenance may result in hoist cable breakage. Below, we have provided a procedure to verify that your spare tire is stored correctly.

The spare tire storage system on your vehicle is designed to store the spare tire securely against the underbody of your vehicle when cable tension is maintained. When properly tightened, the hoist and cable design does not allow the cable to unwind over time and loosen the tire storage. However, if you do not store/re-store your tire securely it could come loose. The tire could also become loose if it has a significant loss of air pressure. If the tire becomes loose, there could be relative movement between the tire and the vehicle when the vehicle is in motion. Over time, this movement could cause the cable to fatigue and ultimately break. This would allow the spare tire to fall off the vehicle.

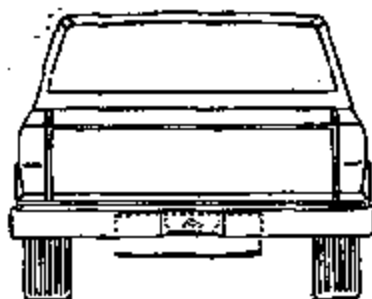
Your owner's manual tells you to check tire inflation pressures at least once a month. Make sure that all tires are inflated to the correct pressures. This tire inflation check should include checking the inflation of the spare tire. (See "Tires" in the index to the owner's manual for more information). Try to push or pull and then rotate or turn the tire to be sure that it will not move (see diagram on next page). A spare tire that can be rotated or turned is not stored securely. Either add air to the spare tire or turn the hoist, whichever is appropriate.

At least twice a year when you are checking the inflation pressure for the spare tire, also check to make sure that it is stored securely. In addition, tires should be rotated every 10,000 to 13,000km (6,000 to 8,000 miles). See your owner's manual for additional information. Any time you notice unusual wear, rotate your tires as soon as possible and check wheel alignment. Also check for damaged tires or wheels. When you rotate your tires, check the spare tire by attempting to push or pull and then rotate or turn it to ensure it is stored securely and will not move. If the spare tire moves, secure it properly as indicated above.

Some customers have said that they are not able to tighten the spare tire hoist cable to the two clicks recommended in the owner's manual. It is not absolutely necessary to get two clicks for the tire to be secure. Once you have raised the tire fully, check to ensure secure storage.

We hope this information is useful to you. Should you have any further questions concerning the proper operation of the spare tire storage system on your vehicle, please contact our Customer Communication Centre at 1-800-263-3777 (English) or 1-800-263-7854 (French).

Customer Support Department
General Motors of Canada Limited



Push & Pull



Rotate Tire

1908 Colonel Sam Drive, Oshawa, Ontario L1H 8P7