

U.S. Department
of TransportationNational Highway
Traffic Safety
Administration

DOT Auto Safety Hotline
Vehicle Owner's Questionnaire (VOQ)

NATIONWIDE 1-888-DASH-2-DOT
1-888-327-4236
www.nhtsa.dot.gov/hotline

FOR AGENCY USE ONLY 118

Data Received

10-MAR-2000

 Od_or _____
 rt_dt _____
 od_rt _____
 up_ltr _____

Reference No.

858312

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

Signature of Owner _____ Date ____/____/____

VEHICLE INFORMATION

Vehicle Ident. No. (VIN) <small>(Listed at front of windshield or driver's side)</small> 3GNEK18R4TG104166	Vehicle Make CHEVROLET TRU	Vehicle Model TAHOE	Vehicle Year 1996	Current Odometer Reading
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Purchase Date	Dealer's Name _____	Engine Size (CID/CC/L) _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Turbo <input type="checkbox"/> Diesel <input type="checkbox"/> Gas <input type="checkbox"/> Fuel Injection
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New <input type="checkbox"/> Used	City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____	No. Cylinders _____	

Transmission Type <input type="checkbox"/> Manual <input type="checkbox"/> Automatic	Antilock Brakes <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	Restraint System <input type="checkbox"/> 3-Point Belt <input type="checkbox"/> Motorbell <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Driverside Airbag <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2-Point Belt <input type="checkbox"/> Passengerside Airbag	Cruise Control <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	Drive Train <input type="checkbox"/> Front <input type="checkbox"/> Rear <input type="checkbox"/> 4-Wheel	Vehicle Type <input type="checkbox"/> Car <input type="checkbox"/> Sport Ult <input type="checkbox"/> Van <input type="checkbox"/> Truck <input type="checkbox"/> Minivan <input type="checkbox"/> Motorcycle <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____	Body Style <input type="checkbox"/> 2-Door <input type="checkbox"/> 4-Door <input type="checkbox"/> Stationwagon <input type="checkbox"/> Pick Up Truck <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other _____
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FAILED COMPONENT(S)/PART(S) INFORMATION

Component 12112200	Part Name(s) INTERIOR SYSTEMS:PASSIVE RESTRAINT:AIR BAG:SIDE DOOR:DR	Location <input type="checkbox"/> Left <input type="checkbox"/> Right <input type="checkbox"/> Front <input type="checkbox"/> Rear	Failed Part(s) <input type="checkbox"/> Original <input type="checkbox"/> Replacement
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No. of Failures	Date(s) of Failure(s) <u>12-11-2000</u> Mileage at Failure(s) <u>83000</u> Vehicle Speed at Failure(s) <u>30</u>	Failed Part(s) Available? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	NHTSA Previously Contacted? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
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APPLICATION INCIDENT INFORMATION

(Please describe in detail the incident(s), failure(s), crash(es), and injury(ies) on the back of this form.)

Crash <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Fire <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	Number of Persons Injured 2	Number of Fatalities 0	Estimated Property Damage	Reported to Police <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
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NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION OF FAILURE(S), INCIDENT(S), INJURY(IES)

WHEN TRAVELING ABOUT 30 MPH VEHICLE HIT A TREE HEAD-ON, AND THERE WAS NO DEPLOYMENT OF DRIVER'S SIDE AIR BAG. VEHICLE WAS TOTALLED. PLEASE PROVIDE ANY FURTHER INFORMATION.

*AK

CONTINUED ON BACK PLEASE

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.

DOT Auto Safety Hotline				FOR AGENCY USE ONLY 118	
 U.S. Department of Transportation National Highway Traffic Safety Administration		Vehicle Owner's Questionnaire (VOQ) NATIONWIDE 1-888-DASH-2-DOT 1-888-327-4236 www.nhtsa.dot.gov/hotline		Date Received 10-MAR-2000	
OWNER INFORMATION (Type or Print) <div style="background-color: black; width: 100%; height: 40px; margin-top: 5px;"></div>				Reference No. 858312	
Do you authorize NHTSA to provide a copy of report to the manufacturer of your vehicle? In the absence of an authorization, NHTSA WILL NOT provide your name and address to the vehicle manufacturer.				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	
Signature of Owner _____				Date <u>1/1</u>	
VEHICLE INFORMATION					
Vehicle Ident. No. (VIN) <small>(located at bottom of windshield on driver's side)</small> 3GNEK18R4TG104166		Vehicle Make CHEVROLET TRU	Vehicle Model TAHOE	Vehicle Year 1996	Current Odometer Reading 93001
Purchase Date 2/29/96	Dealer's Name <u>Mt. Kisco Chevrolet</u> City <u>Mt. Kisco</u> State <u>N.Y.</u> Zip Code <u>10549</u>		Engine Size (CID/CC/L) <u>V8 Vortec</u> No. Cylinders <u>8</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> Turbo <input type="checkbox"/> Diesel <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gas <input type="checkbox"/> Fuel Injection	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New <input type="checkbox"/> Used	Transmission Type <input type="checkbox"/> Manual <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Automatic	Antilock Brakes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Restraint System <input type="checkbox"/> 3-Point Belt <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Driverside Airbag <input type="checkbox"/> Passengerside Airbag	<input type="checkbox"/> Motorbelt <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2-Point Belt	Cruise Control <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Front <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rear <input type="checkbox"/> 4-Wheel	Drive Train	Vehicle Type <input type="checkbox"/> Car <input type="checkbox"/> Van <input type="checkbox"/> Minivan <input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sport Utl <input type="checkbox"/> Truck <input type="checkbox"/> Motorcycle	Body Style <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2-Door <input type="checkbox"/> 4-Door <input type="checkbox"/> Stationwagon <input type="checkbox"/> Pick Up Truck <input type="checkbox"/> Other	
FAILED COMPONENT(S)/PART(S) INFORMATION					
Component 12112200	Part Name(s) INTERIOR SYSTEMS:PASSIVE RESTRAINT:AIR BAG:SIDE DOOR:D Driver's side		Location <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Left <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Front <input type="checkbox"/> Right <input type="checkbox"/> Rear	Failed Part(s) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original <input type="checkbox"/> Replacement	
No of Failures 1	Date(s) of Failure(s) <u>13-FEB-2000</u> Mileage at Failure(s) <u>93000</u> Vehicle Speed at Failure(s) <u>30</u>		Failed Part(s) Available? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	NHTSA Previously Contacted? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	
APPLICATION INCIDENT INFORMATION					
(Please describe in detail the incident(s), Failure(s), Crash(es), and injury(ies) on the back of this form)					
Crash <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Fire <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	Number of Persons Injured 2	Number of Fatalities 0	Estimated Property Damage 21,285.95 (Tahoe)	Reported to Police <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION OF FAILURE(S), INCIDENT(S), INJURY(IES)					
WHEN TRAVELING ABOUT 30 MPH VEHICLE HIT A TREE ON HEAD-ON, AND THERE WAS NO DEPLOYMENT OF DRIVER'S SIDE AIR BAG. VEHICLE WAS TOTALLED. PLEASE PROVIDE ANY FURTHER INFORMATION. -AK					
<p style="font-size: 2em; font-family: cursive;">See attached letter</p> <p style="font-size: 1.5em; font-family: cursive;">Thank You</p>					
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.					

REC'D
 MAY 29 1996
 OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL
 DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

March 31, 2000

U.S. Department of Transportation
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
400 Seventh Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Madam or Sir,

On February 13th, 2000, I hit a tree head-on while driving my 1996 Chevrolet Tahoe and the air bag did not deploy. Given the circumstances, I feel this is gross malfunction of the critical safety restraint system and request intervention by your department.

I was driving my Tahoe with two passengers, and I passed out. I crossed the centerline and drove across a front lawn where I struck a 30' Birch tree head-on; the tree was 10-12 inches in diameter. The tree, although still standing, was hit with such impact that the root ball was thrust upwards in the frozen ground. The front bumper of my Tahoe literally wrapped around the tree. The damage caused by the tree continued, crushing the radiator and fan into the pulley system, and knocking the serpentine belt off the pulleys & alternator. The tree's path into the engine compartment did not stop until it encountered the engine block. The bumper and underside of the Tahoe was a tangled mess of metal and steel. Please refer to the photographs (Enclosure # 1) included for your inspection. Further investigation showed that the frame and chassis were bent and damaged beyond repair. The insurance company declared my Tahoe (valued at \$21,285.95 by Amica) a total loss.

The passengers suffered a variety of injuries as a result of the impact with the tree. The passenger in the front right seat suffered a broken arm above the elbow – which I understand is quite uncommon. He is a very muscular individual, and had his seat belt on. The passenger in the rear seat (a 200-lb. man) was thrown into the front, breaking the spine of the front seat before hitting and breaking the windshield. I had my seat belt on, but was still thrown into the column to the left of the windshield, suffering contusions, abrasions and bruises. All three of us were rushed to the Hospital by ambulance. I feel there is little doubt that much of this injury could have been avoided had the air bag deployed.

General Motors' representative, Mr. Bob Guenther, and I have talked by phone on several occasions. Mr. Guenther maintained that despite the magnitude of the damage to my vehicle, the point of impact was 4" away from the sensor and there was an insufficient change in velocity to deploy the air bag (calculated by the computer). My speed was estimated to be 30 mph at the moment of impact and the photographs show the point of impact and damage to be at the center of the car front. Mr. Guenther sent me a letter denying any malfunction of GM's air bag system (Enclosure # 2). Interestingly, Mr. Guenther indicated that roughly 60% of all of his cases deal with air bags!

If Mr. Guenther's claims are accurate, then it would seem that GM has a poorly engineered supplemental restraint system. Mr. Guenther sent me a pamphlet "What You Need to Know About Airbags" from Automotive Coalition for Traffic Safety, Inc. (printed September 1999). As an explanation of what happens "When a Collision Occurs", a picture is shown of an airbag deployed when a car hit a pole (please refer to enclosure # 3). Even though this was brought to Mr. Guenther's attention, he still did not see the similarity with my accident. I feel that GM should make improvements in the number, placement and/or sensitivity of the crash sensors, since no one "chooses" their point of impact in an accident.

Car manufacturers' should make passenger safety their foremost priority. After a day in the Hospital's Emergency Room, it leaves me to question the value of an airbag system in which non-deployment is justified because "the point of impact was 4 inches from the sensor". Mr. Guenther did tell me that if I had struck the sensor directly, the air bag would have deployed.

There are sufficient unanswered questions regarding the non-deployment of the airbag in this accident. I am writing to seek your assistance in investigating the circumstances with the hope that serious injury to other people can be avoided. For your information, I have also notified the Center for Auto Safety of this problem (see Enclosure # 4).

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

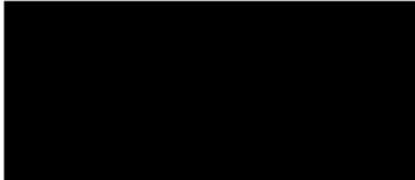




GMC

GENERAL MOTORS BUSINESS RESOURCE CENTER

March 10, 2000



VIN: 3GNEK18R4TG104166

Dear Mr. 

Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to review the product allegation involving your 1996 Chevrolet Tahoe.

Our investigation revealed no evidence to support your product allegation. Therefore, General Motors is unable to assume responsibility for damages and we suggest that you resolve this matter through your insurance carrier.

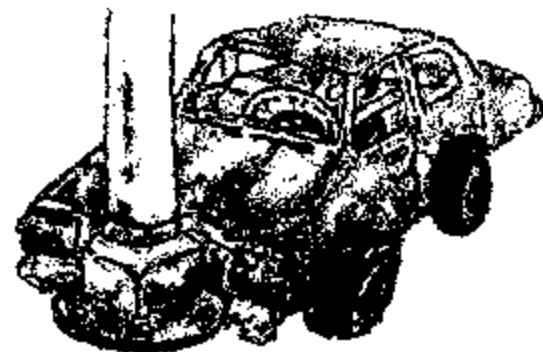
If you have any questions or concerns, you may contact ESIS at the address listed below.

ESIS
300 Renaissance Center
Mail Code 482 C20 D71
Detroit, MI 48265-3000

Respectfully,

Robert W. Guenther
Customer Relationship Manager
Product Allegation Resolution Team
General Motors Corporation

When a Collision Occurs



When a collision occurs, the vehicle rapidly decelerates while its structure absorbs the majority of the crash forces. Unbelted occupants continue to move forward at the vehicle's original speed until the car's interior (the steering wheel, instrument panel, windshield, etc.) stops their movement. Belted occupants come to a more gradual stop by being secured to the vehicle's structure. In severe crashes, even properly belted occupants may come in contact with the car's interior.

Airbags supplement the safety belt by reducing the likelihood that the occupant's head and upper torso will strike some part of the vehicle's interior. They also help reduce the risk of serious injury by distributing crash forces more evenly across the occupant's body.

When the sensors detect a moderate to severe frontal collision, they close an electrical circuit and send a signal to the inflator unit within the airbag module. An igniter starts a chemical reaction which produces harmless nitrogen gas. The nitrogen gas passes through filters and fills the airbag which then bursts through the module cover. Some passenger-side airbags use argon gas stored in a high-pressure canister rather than chemically generated gas. The argon gas which fills the airbag is also harmless.

From the onset of the collision, the entire deployment and inflation process takes only about 1/20th of a second, faster than the blink of an eye. Airbags must inflate this rapidly if they are to help reduce the risk of the occupant hitting the vehicle's interior components.



Approximately 1/20th sec.

Less than 1 sec.

Center for Auto Safety
1825 Connecticut Ave.
Northwest, Suite 330
Washington D.C. 20009

Re: 1996 Chevrolet Tahoe

Problem: Non-deployment of airbag following a head-on collision with a tree

To Whom It May Concern:

On February 13th of this year, I was involved in an auto accident, where I sustained various injuries. I was driving my 1996 Chevrolet Tahoe, when a medical condition caused me to pass out and consequently I drove off the road and hit a tree. I was traveling on a paved road, the truck drifted onto someone's front yard and struck a birch tree 10-12 inches in diameter at about 30 mph. After receiving medical attention at a hospital, I was told that my driver-side airbag did not deploy. I contacted a representative of the General Motors Corporation, and an investigator was sent to inspect my truck. Pictures, measurements, and data collected from the computer in my truck was sent to GM for analysis by their engineers. General Motor's later denied that the airbag system malfunctioned and claimed that their product performed the way that it was designed. The representative's main reason for non-deployment of the airbag was because the point of impact was 4 inches away from the center airbag sensor.

My truck was valued at close to \$24,000 and due to the extensive damage, my insurance company had no choice but to deem my truck "a total loss". I feel my accident reveals a gross oversight in the airbag system. Whether it may be the quantity of sensors, the sensitivity of those sensors, or something else altogether, I feel something should be done. To collide with a tree 10-12 inches in diameter, and cause such extensive damage and injury without triggering the airbag sensor, leaves many more drivers at risk, and some maybe not as lucky as I.

Please send me information in relation to airbags, their reasons for deployment and/or non-deployment, and anything in relation to the Chevrolet Tahoe. I appreciate any and all of your assistance. I have included with this letter a picture showing the damage to my truck.





