

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 125

Date Received

13-MAR-2000

 Od_or _____
 Rt_dt _____
 od_rt _____
 up_ltr _____

Reference No.

858373

 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) (located at front of windshield on drivers side) JB36U2482MU039009	Vehicle Make DODGE	Vehicle Model COLT	Vehicle Year 1991	Current Odometer Reading
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Purchase Date	Dealer's Name _____	Engine Size (CID/CC/L) _____	☐ Turbo ☐ Diesel ☐ Gas ☐ Fuel Injection
☐ New ☒ Used	City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____	No Cylinders _____	

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

Component 06300000	Part Name(s) ELECTRICAL SYSTEM: WIRING	Location ☐ Left ☐ Right ☐ Front ☐ Rear	Failed Part(s) ☐ Original ☐ Replacement
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

APPLICATION INCIDENT INFORMATION

(Please describe in detail the incident(s), Failure(s), Crash(es), and injury(ies) on the back of this form)

Crash ☐ Yes ☒ No	Fire ☒ Yes ☐ No	Number of Persons Injured	Number of Fatalities	Estimated Property Damage	Reported to Police ☐ Yes ☒ No
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NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION OF FAILURE(S), INCIDENT(S), INJURY(IES)

WIRING HARNESS FROM THE BATTERY TO THE FIREWALL SHORT CIRCUITED, CAUSING AN UNDER HOOD FIRE. PLEASE GIVE ANY FURTHER DETAILS. *AK

CONTINUED ON BACK (REVERSE)

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 Vehicle Owner's Questionnaire (VOQ) U.S. Department of Transportation National Highway Traffic Safety Administration NATIONALWIDE 1-888-DASH-2-DOT 1-888-327-4236 www.nhtsa.dot.gov/hotline		FOR AGENCY USE ONLY 125 RECEIVED Date Received: 00 APR 12 AM 10 13-MAR-2000 OFFICE DEFECTS INVESTIGATION Reference No. 858373 Work Number _____ Home Number _____	
OWNER INFORMATION (Type or Print) 			
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: 3/31/00			
VEHICLE INFORMATION			
Vehicle Ident. No. (VIN) (Located at bottom of windshield on driver's side) C A JB3PU2482MU039009		Vehicle Make DODGE	Vehicle Model COLT
		Vehicle Year 1991	Current Odometer Reading
Purchase Date 10/21/99 ☐ New ☒ Used	Dealer's Name Hanke Auto City Hancock State Mi. Zip Code 49930		Engine Size (CID/CCIL) 1.5L No Cylinders 4 ☐ Turbo Diesel Gas ☒ Fuel Injection
Transmission Type ☒ Manual ☐ Automatic	Antilock Brakes ☐ Yes ☒ No	Restraint System ☐ 3-Point Belt ☐ Driverside Airbag ☐ Passengerside Airbag ☐ Motorbelt ☐ 2-Point Belt	Cruise Control ☐ Yes ☒ No
		Drive Train ☒ Front ☐ Rear ☐ 4-Wheel	Vehicle Type ☒ Car ☐ Van ☐ Minivan ☐ Other ☐ Sport Utility Truck ☐ Motorcycle
		Body Style ☒ 2-Door ☐ 4-Door ☐ Stationwagon ☐ Pick Up Truck ☐ Other	
FAILED COMPONENT(S)/PART(S) INFORMATION			
Component 083/0009	Part Name(s) (underhood) ELECTRICAL SYSTEM: WIRING		Location ☒ Left ☐ Right ☒ Front ☐ Rear
		Failed Part(s) ☒ Original ☐ Replacement	
No of Failures 	Date(s) of Failure(s) 3/5/00 11:30 P.M. Mileage at Failure(s) _____ Vehicle Speed at Failure(s) _____		Failed Part(s) Available? ☐ Yes ☒ No
		NHTSA Previously Contacted? ☐ Yes ☒ 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 ☐ Yes ☒ No	Fire ☒ Yes ☐ No	Number of Persons Injured 2	Number of Fatalities 0
		Estimated Property Damage \$800	Reported to Police ☐ Yes ☒ No
NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION OF FAILURE(S), INCIDENT(S), INJURY(IES)			
WIRING HARNESS FROM THE BATTERY TO THE FIREWALL SHORT CIRCUITED, CAUSING AN UNDER HOOD FIRE. PLEASE GIVE ANY FURTHER DETAILS. *AK Owner of vehicle, John Taivalkoski, was driving on the Sedar Bay Road approx. 5 miles North of M-203 & Calumet, Mi. when flames started coming out of hood area. John stopped the car & turned off the lights & ignition. However the headlights stayed on for a while. John stuffed snow into the places in the left fender where the			
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.			

Fold to show Return Address (no stamp needed) Fasten with tape or staple and mail

INFORMATION ON TIRE FAILURE(S) (IF APPLICABLE)

TIRE IDENTIFICATION NO.*

D O T

MANUFACTURER/TIRE NAME

SIZE

* The identification number consists of 7 to 10 letters and numerals following the letters DOT. It is usually located near the rim flange on the side opposite the whitewall or on either side of a blackwall tire.

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION (CONTINUED)

Fire was coming from, burning his hands and suffering smoke inhalation. Apparently the wiring harness that runs from the battery and thru the left fender area to the ~~front~~^{dash} of the car shorted out & caught on fire. The fire burned a hole in the splash guard above the left front wheel. After the fire subsided John ran to his grandfather's house about a mile away. When they returned to the car, grandfather Jack Haataja suggested that they start the car & see if it was OK. Upon doing this, the fire immediately erupted from the same area. Jack Haataja suffered smoke inhalation as he tried to see where the fire was coming from and while attempting to put the fire out. Once the fire appeared to be out, the vehicle was towed to owners home (1-1 1/2 miles from fire scene) and has remained undisturbed pending the results of further investigation. No attempt has been made to repair this vehicle. On 3/10/00 this problem was reported to NHTSA & Chrysler. Chrysler assigned this Corporate File No. 6925659 and subsequently a MR, R. Wade Greenisen of EA Associates, Bingham Farms, MI, inspected the vehicle on 3/16/00. See Chrysler Response & our 3/31 Letter.

U.S. Department
of Transportation

National Highway
Traffic Safety
Administration

400 Seventh St., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590

Official Business
Penalty for Private Use \$300

BUSINESS REPLY MAIL

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U.S. Department of Transportation
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
Auto Safety Hotline, NEF-11 HL
400 7th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20590



NO POSTAGE
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UNITED STATES

DAIMLERCHRYSLER

DaimlerChrysler
Motors Corporation

March 21, 2000

[REDACTED]
Reference No. [REDACTED]
V.I.N.: JB3CU24A2MU039009

Dear Mr. [REDACTED]

This is in regard to the inspection performed to your vehicle on March 16, 2000 by a representative of Engineering Analysis Associates.

We have reviewed your recent fire report with deep concern. Needless to say, we sincerely regret the unfortunate fire that occurred.

After our inspection of your vehicle, the information at hand would not permit us to associate the fire with a manufacturing or assembly error. We are sure you will appreciate, fires of this nature can and do occur for a number of reasons not associated with the manufacturing process.

In the absence of any substantiating evidence indicating that the cause of the fire was attributed to a condition existing in the vehicle when it left our manufacturing plant, we find it necessary to deny responsibility in this matter.

Thank you for calling this to our attention.

Sincerely,



A. L. Gilbert
Special Investigations
(248) 944-7037

ALG/ig

FAX

March 31, 2000

Rte. 1, Box 435
Calumet, Mi. 49913

Daimler Chrysler Motors Corporation
Attn: A. L. Gilbert, Special Investigations
PO Box 21-8004
Auburn Hills, MI 48321-8004

Dear Mr. Gilbert:

Re: 1991 Dodge Colt, Ref No: 6925659
VIN: JB3CU24A2MU039009

We are in receipt of your letter dated 3/21/2000 wherein you state that "After our inspection of your vehicle, the information at hand would not permit us to associate the fire with a manufacturing or assembly error". You also wrote that "In the absence of any substantiating evidence indicating that the cause of the fire was attributed to the a condition existing in the vehicle when it left our manufacturing plant, we find it necessary to deny responsibility in this matter."

The inspection performed on March 16, 2000 by Mr. R. Wade Greenisen of Engineering Analysis Associates was basically a non-inspection in which no attempt was made to ascertain the probable cause of the fire which broke out inside of the left fender. The space inside of the left fender is completely enclosed by sheet metal and plastic parts. Mr. Greenisen made no attempt to remove any of the panels so that an inspection could be made of the situation inside this enclosed space. His "inspection" consisted of noting and photographing the indications that the internal fire left on the vehicle externals which included the blistered paint on the fender, smoke stains on the driver's door and a hole burned in the plastic panel separating the wheel well from the internal fender space in question. No effort was made to inspect the enclosed space in which the fire broke out.

Since Daimler Chrysler and it's representatives do not seem interested in determining the actual cause of this fire, I began my own investigation on the behalf of my son John Taivalkoski who is the owner of this vehicle. I am a mechanical engineer having graduated from Michigan Technological University in 1971 with a Bachelor of Sciences in Mechanical Engineering. I have been active as a mechanical engineer since that time for various companies. I feel that my qualifications are sufficient to allow me to render a credible opinion on this matter.

On March 30, 2000 the plastic pan which separates the wheel well area from the inside of the left fender was removed. The cause of the fire is now readily apparent to even untrained persons. The main wiring harness which runs through this enclosed space shorted out due to the fact that it was insufficiently supported allowing it to lie directly on a sharp sheet metal part of the upper fender assembly to which the plastic pan was attached. A critical support clamp for the wiring harness was

either never installed in the factory or is of such an ineffective design which allows it to easily fall out of place and hence allow the wiring harness to rest upon the sharp sheet metal parts below. It is very apparent from the wear on the wiring harness that it must have been resting on the sharp sheet metal for a considerable amount of time. Since this wiring harness which runs inside of the enclosed fender is not protected by a plastic sleeve but only a thin layer of wrapped tape the insulation on the individual wires wore away after some time and thus shorted out causing the fire.

It is my opinion that the information now at hand would permit you to conclude that the fire was caused by a manufacturing or assembly error or because of a poorly designed harness support system which has a tendency to fall out of place over time.

I have advised John Taivalkoski to leave the vehicle exactly as found during yesterday's inspection. This vehicle will be available for you to re-inspect exactly as found until 6 pm on Friday, April 7, 2000. If Daimler Chrysler expresses no interest in verifying the cause of the fire in this vehicle prior to the above stated time it will be assumed that Daimler Chrysler wishes to be considered negligent in the matter of vehicle safety.

This incident has been reported to the National Traffic Safety Administration. Copies of your responses and this letter are also being forwarded in the interest of protecting other consumers from the possibility of similar fires. I would highly recommend that Daimler Chrysler issue an alert to it's dealers to begin a preliminary investigation of similarly designed vehicles to ascertain whether there is a potential for this to happen to other vehicles as well. In this situation the injuries were non-life threatening consisting only of burns to the hands and smoke inhalation. Someone else may not be so lucky.

You may contact me by phone as follows: Day: [REDACTED]
Eve: [REDACTED]

Sincerely,
[REDACTED]

Faxed to 248-512-8084 on 3/31/00. Mr. Gilbert was alerted via his voice mail on 3/30/00 that this Fax would be forthcoming since he was not available by phone at that time. DT