

DAIMLERCHRYSLER RECEIVED
NVS-210

August 29, 2003

Mr. Jeff Quandt, Chief
Vehicle Control Group
Office of Defects Investigation
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
400 Seventh Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590

2003 AUG 30 A DaimlerChrysler Corporation
Stephan J. Speth
Director
Vehicle Compliance & Safety Affairs
OFFICE OF DEFECTS
INVESTIGATION

Dear Mr. Quandt:

Reference: NVS -213 cat; EA02-029

This document responds to the referenced inquiry dated August 5, 2003 regarding operation of hood latches on 1997 model year Jeep Grand Cherokee vehicles.

DaimlerChrysler has investigated hood latch assemblies on these vehicles for more than one year. The investigation included our initial response to NHTSA inquiry PE02-045, a 184 vehicle field survey, and a subsequent dimensional analysis performed on a representative sample of secondary hood latch mechanisms.

After thorough analysis and evaluation, we have concluded that there is no indication of a defect with the Jeep Grand Cherokee hood latch system. The few complaints which have been received are random and do not suggest the existence of any defect. Further, with the exception of three additional customer complaints, two of which are also identified as NHTSA VOQ's, there have been no additional customer complaints received since our last examination of the complaint database in June of 2002. The total number of complaints remains low, considering there were over 260,000 1997 Grand Cherokee vehicles sold or leased in the United States, and that these vehicles are now 7 model years old.

DaimlerChrysler has not identified any engineering change or manufacturing process deviation that could be responsible for the few reported hood fly-up conditions on the subject vehicle population. Inspections conducted on the survey vehicles' latches indicated that there were no specific dimensional factors which contributed to improper latch performance.

The reports to NHTSA regarding hoods opening without warning are isolated and are largely due to customers not fully closing the hood of their vehicle. Three of the five VOQ's provided were unsubstantiated and were submitted between 5 months and 52 months following the alleged incident dates. Further, the driver of any Grand Cherokee would have a visual warning when the hood is not fully closed and retained by the primary hood latching device.

Sincerely,


Stephan J. Speth

Attachments and Enclosures

- Q1. Separately, for each subject vehicle manufactured to date by Daimler-Chrysler, for sale or lease in the United States, state the following:**
- a. Vehicle Identification number (VIN);**
 - b. Date of manufacture;**
 - c. Date warranty coverage commenced; and**
 - d. The State in the United States where the vehicle was originally sold or leased (or delivered for sale or lease).**

Provide the table in Microsoft Access 2000, or a compatible format, entitled "PRODUCTION DATA (INEA02029)." See Enclosure 2, Data Collection Disc, for a pre-formatted table which provides further details regarding this submission.

- A1. Enclosure 1 contains the requested Production Data Information in the Access 2000 format (enclosed CD-rom). There were 262,136 1997 model year Grand Cherokees produced for sale or lease in the United States.**
- Q2. State the number of each of the following, excluding those submitted in Daimler-Chrysler's July 16, 2002 response to PE02-045, received by Daimler-Chrysler, or of which Daimler-Chrysler are otherwise aware, which relate to, or may relate to, the alleged defect in the subject vehicles:**
- a. Consumer complaints, including those from fleet operators;**
 - b. Field reports, including dealer field reports;**
 - c. Reports involving a crash, injury, or fatality, based on claims against the manufacturer involving a death or injury, notices received by the manufacturer alleging or proving that a death or injury was caused by a possible defect in a subject vehicle, property damage claims, consumer complaints, or field reports;**
 - d. Property damage claims; and**
 - e. Third-party arbitration proceedings where Daimler-Chrysler is or was a party to the arbitration; and**
 - f. Lawsuits, both pending and closed, in which Daimler-Chrysler is or was a defendant or codefendant.**

For subparts "a" through "d," state the total number of each item (e.g., consumer complaints, field reports, etc.) separately. Multiple incidents involving the same vehicle are to be counted separately. Multiple reports of the same incident are also to be counted separately (i.e., a consumer complaint and a field report involving the same incident in which a crash occurred are to be counted as a crash report, a field report and a consumer complaint).

In addition, for items "e" through "f," provide a summary description of the alleged problem and causal and contributing factors and Daimler-Chrysler's assessment of the problem, with a summary of the significant underlying facts and evidence. For

Items "e" and "f," identify the parties to the action, as well as the caption, court, docket number, and date on which the complaint or other document initiating the action was filed.

- A2. a) DaimlerChrysler has provided 3 customer complaints that pertain to the secondary hood latch investigation received since July 16, 2002. Two of these three complaints are also NHTSA VOQ's (VIN#s VC728466 and VC831475). DaimlerChrysler is not aware of any additional hood latch related complaints for the 1997 Grand Cherokee vehicles.
- b) There are no field reports that relate to the hood latch system.
- c) There are no reports that involve a crash, injury, or fatality that relate to the hood latch system.
- d) There are no property damage claims to report that relate to the hood latch system.
- e) There are no third party arbitration proceedings against DaimlerChrysler that relate to the hood latch system.
- f) There are no lawsuits that relate to the hood latch system.
- Q3. Separately, for each item (complaint, report, claim, notice, or matter) within the scope of your response to Request No. 2, state the following information:
- a. Daimler-Chrysler's file number or other identifier used;
- b. The category of the item, as identified in Request No. 2 (i.e., consumer complaint, field report, etc.);
- c. Vehicle owner or fleet name (and fleet contact person), address, and telephone number;
- d. Vehicle's VIN;
- e. Vehicle's mileage at time of incident;
- f. Incident date;
- g. Report or claim date;
- h. Whether a crash is alleged;
- i. Whether property damage is alleged;
- j. Number of alleged injuries, if any;
- k. Number of alleged fatalities, if any; and
- l. Summary of alleged incident.

Provide this information in Microsoft Access 2000, or a compatible format, entitled "REQUEST NUMBER TWO DATA (INEA02029)." See Enclosure 2, Data Collection Disc, for a pre-formatted table which provides further details regarding this submission.

- A3. Enclosure 2 (enclosed CD-rom) contains the detailed information for each item described in the answer to question 2 in the requested Access 2000 format.
- Q4. Describe all assessments, analyses, tests, test results, studies, surveys, simulations, investigations, inquiries and/or evaluations (collectively, "actions")

that relate to, or may relate to, the alleged defect in the subject vehicles that have been conducted, are being conducted, are planned, or are being planned by, or for, Daimler-Chrysler, other than those identified in Daimler-Chrysler's October 18, 2002 response to PE02-045. For each such action, provide the following information:

- a. Action title or identifier;
- b. The actual or planned start date;
- c. The actual or expected end date;
- d. Brief summary of the subject and objective of the action;
- e. Engineering group(s)/supplier(s) responsible for designing and for conducting the action; and
- f. A brief summary of the findings and/or conclusions resulting from the action.

For each action identified, provide copies of all documents related to the action, regardless of whether the documents are in interim, draft, or final form. Organize the documents chronologically by action.

- A4. Since our July 16, 2002 correspondence, DaimlerChrysler has conducted a survey of the suspect vehicle population and a dimensional inspection of the latches removed from the survey vehicles. The information was provided to NHTSA in correspondence dated September 30, 2002 and April 4, 2003, respectively. There were no additional actions taken that relate to the Jeep Grand Cherokee hood latch investigation. An overview of the Jeep Grand Cherokee hood latch investigation was presented to NHTSA at the quarterly meeting held on July 24, 2003, a copy of which has been previously provided to your office.