U.S. Department of Transportation

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

ODI RESUME

Investigation: RQ 04-002
Prompted By: IE04-001
Date Opened: 02/18/2004 Date Closed: 05/27/2004
Principal Investigator: Peter C. Ong
Subject: Driver's Seat Belt Buckle Assembly

Manufacturer: General Motors Corp., Isuzu Manufacturing Services of America
Products: 1997 Chev. S-10, GMC Sonoma and Isuzu Hombre Pickup Trucks
Population: 230,576

Problem Description: The energy-absorbing loop in the driver's safety belt buckle assembly may deploy during rollover crashes and increase the risk of partial or full ejection of the occupant resulting in fatal injuries

FAILURE REPORT SUMMARY

	ODI	Manufacturer	Total
Complaints:	2	2	2
Crashes/Fires:	2	2	2
Injury Incidents:	0	0	0
# Injuries:	0	0	0
Fatality Incidents:	2	2	2
# Fatalities:	2	2	2
Other*:	0	0	0

*Description of Other: Mfr Warranty Claims

Action: This Recall Query (RQ) has been closed

Engineer: *Peter C. Ong* Date: *05/27/2004*
Div. Chief: *Thomas Z. Cooper* Date: *05/27/2004*
Office Dir.: *Kathleen C. Demeter* Date: *05/27/2004*

Summary: On February 18, 2004, ODI opened this Recall Query (RQ) based on two fatality reports involving MY 1997 GM S-10 pickup trucks. Each report alleged that the belted driver occupant was ejected in a multiple-rotation rollover crash. The MY 1997 S/T series pickups use an energy-absorbing loop in the driver seat belt that allows the webbing to elongate up to 10 inches (to mitigate driver injury in frontal crashes).

GM also used this energy-absorbing loop seat belt design in MY1997 S/T series utility vehicles (Chevrolet Blazer, GMC Jimmy and Oldsmobile Bravada). GM conducted a safety recall campaign (03V-117) to replace the driver seat belt in these utility vehicles based on a higher fatality rate of ejected belted drivers in rollover crashes.

Both fatal crashes are severe rollover crashes (multiple-rotation rollover) and both vehicles sustained damage to the roof structure. ODI reviewed the field data performance of the subject vehicles and compared them to peer vehicles using NHTSA's fatality analysis reporting system (FARS) database. The FARS data did not indicate a field performance trend for the subject vehicle.

A safety-related defect trend has not been identified at this time and further use of agency resources does not appear to be warranted. Accordingly, this investigation is closed. The closing of this investigation does not constitute a finding by NHTSA that a safety-related defect does not exist. The agency will monitor this issue and take further action if warranted by the circumstances.

6/1/04 DD