



U.S. Department
of Transportation

National Highway
Traffic Safety
Administration

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

JUL 15 2004

CERTIFIED MAIL
RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED

Stephen J. Speth, Director
Vehicle Compliance & Safety Affairs
DaimlerChrysler Corporation
CIMS482-00-91
800 Chrysler Drive
Auburn Hills, MI 48236-2757

NVS-212mj1
EA04-013

Dear Mr. Speth:

This letter is to advise you that the Office of Defects Investigation (ODI) of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has completed the Recall Query (RQ04-001) concerning alleged driver's air bag clockspring failures in certain Model Year (MY) 1998 and 1999 DaimlerChrysler minivans manufactured by DaimlerChrysler Corporation (DaimlerChrysler). Based on our analysis of the information received, we have upgraded this matter to an Engineering Analysis (EA), which has been assigned identification number EA04-013, and expanded the scope. The investigation includes certain MY 1998 through 2000 DaimlerChrysler minivans. To assist us at this stage of the investigation, we are requesting additional information.

This office has received 107 reports of alleged driver's air bag clockspring failures in MY 1998 and 1999 DaimlerChrysler minivans since we last wrote to DaimlerChrysler. In addition, we are aware of 23 reports for MY 2000 vehicles. Attached is a list of VOQ numbers for the 130 reports. Also, a copy of each report is contained in the enclosed CD ROM for your information.

Unless otherwise stated in the text, the following definitions apply to these information requests:

- **Subject vehicles:** All MY 1998 through 2000 DaimlerChrysler minivans (i.e., Caravan, Grand Caravan, Voyager, Grand Voyager, and Town and Country) manufactured after February 1998 for sale or lease in the United States.
- **Subject components:** Driver's air bag clockspring assembly.
- **DaimlerChrysler:** DaimlerChrysler Corporation, all of its past and present officers and employees, whether assigned to its principal offices or any of its field or other locations, including all of its divisions, subsidiaries (whether or not incorporated) and affiliated enterprises and all of their headquarters, regional, zone and other offices and



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their employees, and all agents, contractors, consultants, attorneys and law firms and other persons engaged directly or indirectly (e.g., employee of a consultant) by or under the control of DaimlerChrysler (including all business units and persons previously referred to), who are or, in or after 1997, were involved in any way with any of the following related to the alleged defect in the subject vehicles:

- a. Design, engineering, analysis, modification or production (e.g. quality control);
 - b. Testing, assessment or evaluation;
 - c. Consideration, or recognition of potential or actual defects, reporting, record-keeping and information management, (e.g., complaints, field reports, warranty information, part sales), analysis, claims, or lawsuits; or
 - d. Communication to, from or intended for zone representatives, fleets, dealers, or other field locations, including but not limited to people who have the capacity to obtain information from dealers.
- **Alleged defect:** Failure of the subject component, illumination of the air bag warning lamp, failure of the horn, failure of the cruise control, and/or non-deployment of driver's air bag during a crash.
 - **Document:** "Document(s)" is used in the broadest sense of the word and shall mean all original written, printed, typed, recorded, or graphic matter whatsoever, however produced or reproduced, of every kind, nature, and description, and all non-identical copies of both sides thereof, including, but not limited to, papers, letters, memoranda, correspondence, communications, electronic mail (e-mail) messages (existing in hard copy and/or in electronic storage), faxes, mailgrams, telegrams, cables, telex messages, notes, annotations, working papers, drafts, minutes, records, audio and video recordings, data, databases, other information bases, summaries, charts, tables, graphics, other visual displays, photographs, statements, interviews, opinions, reports, newspaper articles, studies, analyses, evaluations, interpretations, contracts, agreements, jottings, agendas, bulletins, notices, announcements, instructions, blueprints, drawings, as-builts, changes, manuals, publications, work schedules, journals, statistical data, desk, portable and computer calendars, appointment books, diaries, travel reports, lists, tabulations, computer printouts, data processing program libraries, data processing inputs and outputs, microfilms, microfiches, statements for services, resolutions, financial statements, governmental records, business records, personnel records, work orders, pleadings, discovery in any form, affidavits, motions, responses to discovery, all transcripts, administrative filings and all mechanical, magnetic, photographic and electronic records or recordings of any kind, including any storage media associated with computers, including, but not limited to, information on hard drives, floppy disks, backup tapes, and zip drives, electronic communications, including but not limited to, the Internet and shall include any drafts or revisions pertaining to any of the foregoing, all other things similar to any of the foregoing, however denominated by DaimlerChrysler, any other data compilations from which information can be obtained, translated if necessary, into a usable form and any other documents. For purposes of this request, any document which contains any note, comment, addition, deletion, insertion, annotation, or otherwise comprises a non-identical copy of another document shall be treated as a separate

document subject to production. In all cases where original and any non-identical copies are not available, "document(s)" also means any identical copies of the original and all non-identical copies thereof. Any document, record, graph, chart, film or photograph originally produced in color must be provided in color. Furnish all documents whether verified by the manufacturer or not. If a document is not in the English language, provide both the original document and an English translation of the document.

- **Other Terms:** To the extent that they are used in these information requests, the terms "claim," "consumer complaint," "dealer field report," "field report," "fleet," "good will," "make," "model," "model year," "notice," "property damage," "property damage claim," "type," "warranty," "warranty adjustment," and "warranty claim," whether used in singular or in plural form, have the same meaning as found in 49 CFR 579.4.

In order for my staff to evaluate the alleged defect, certain information is required. Pursuant to 49 U.S.C. § 30166, please provide numbered responses to the following information requests. Insofar as DaimlerChrysler has previously provided a document to ODI, DaimlerChrysler may produce it again or identify the document, the document submission to ODI in which it was included and the precise location in that submission where the document is located. When documents are produced, the documents shall be produced in an identified, organized manner that corresponds with the organization of this information request letter (including all individual requests and subparts). When documents are produced and the documents would not, standing alone, be self-explanatory, the production of documents shall be supplemented and accompanied by explanation.

Please repeat the applicable request verbatim above each response. After DaimlerChrysler's response to each request, identify the source of the information and indicate the last date the information was gathered.

1. State, by model and model year, the number of subject vehicles DaimlerChrysler has manufactured for sale or lease in the United States. Separately, for each subject vehicle manufactured to date by DaimlerChrysler, state the following:
 - a. Vehicle identification number (VIN);
 - b. Make;
 - c. Model;
 - d. Model Year;
 - e. Date of manufacture;
 - f. Place or plant of manufacture;
 - g. Date warranty coverage commenced; and
 - h. The State in the United States where the vehicle was originally sold or leased (or delivered for sale or lease).

Provide the response in a table in Microsoft Access 2000, or a compatible format, entitled "PRODUCTION DATA."

2. State the number of each of the following received by DaimlerChrysler, or of which DaimlerChrysler is 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, or notices received by the manufacturer alleging or proving that a death or injury was caused by a possible defect in a subject vehicle;
 - d. Property damage or personal injury claims;
 - e. Third-party arbitration proceedings where DaimlerChrysler is or was a party to the arbitration; and
 - f. Lawsuits, both pending and closed, in which DaimlerChrysler 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 "c" through "f," provide a summary description of the alleged problem and causal and contributing factors and DaimlerChrysler'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.

3. Separately, for each item or report (consumer complaint, field report, claim, notice, or matter) within the scope of your response to Request No. 2, state the following information:
 - a. DaimlerChrysler'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 make, model and model year;
 - f. Vehicle's mileage at time of incident;
 - g. Incident date;
 - h. Report or claim date;
 - i. Whether a crash is alleged;
 - j. Whether property damage is alleged;
 - k. Number of alleged injuries, if any; and
 - l. Number of alleged fatalities, if any.

Provide this information in Microsoft Access 2000, or a compatible format, entitled "REQUEST NUMBER THREE DATA."

4. Produce copies of all documents related to each item within the scope of Request No. 2. Organize the documents separately by category (i.e., consumer complaints, field reports, etc.) and describe the method DaimlerChrysler used for organizing the documents. Clearly identify DaimlerChrysler's file number, vehicle owner or fleet name, and VIN for each item responsive to this request.
5. State, by model and model year, a total count for all of the following categories of claims, collectively, that have been paid by DaimlerChrysler to date that relate to, or may relate to, the alleged defect in the subject vehicles: warranty claims; extended warranty claims; claims for good will services that were provided; field, zone, or similar adjustments and reimbursements; and warranty claims or repairs made in accordance with a procedure specified in a technical service bulletin or customer satisfaction campaign.

Separately, for each such claim, state the following information:

- a. DaimlerChrysler's claim number;
- b. Vehicle owner or fleet name (and fleet contact person) and telephone number;
- c. VIN;
- d. Repair date;
- e. Vehicle mileage at time of repair;
- f. Repairing dealer's or facility's name, telephone number, city and state or ZIP code;
- g. Labor operation number;
- h. Problem code;
- i. Replacement part number(s) and description(s);
- j. Concern stated by customer; and
- k. Comment, if any, by dealer/technician relating to claim and/or repair.

Provide this information in Microsoft Access 2000, or a compatible format, entitled "WARRANTY DATA."

6. For each subject vehicle that had more than one repair or warranty claim filed related to the alleged defect in the subject component, please state the following:
 - a. Vehicle's make, model and model year;
 - b. Vehicle owner or fleet name (and fleet contact person), address and telephone number;
 - c. Vehicle's VIN;
 - d. Vehicle's mileage at time of the repair or claim; and
 - e. Date of each repair or claim.

Provide this information in Microsoft Access 2000, or a compatible format, entitled "MULTIPLE FAILURE DATA."

In addition, provide DaimlerChrysler's assessment as to why, or for what reason, these vehicles required, or were the subject of, multiple repairs or claims.

7. State, by model and model year, a total count for all of the vehicles repaired under DaimlerChrysler Safety Recall No. B24 separated by labor operation codes: 19-B2-41-81, 19-B2-41-82, and 19-B2-41-83.

Separately, for each such repair, state the following information:

- a. DaimlerChrysler's claim number;
- b. Vehicle owner or fleet name (and fleet contact person) and telephone number;
- c. VIN;
- d. Repair date;
- e. Vehicle mileage at time of repair;
- f. Repairing dealer's or facility's name, telephone number, city and state or ZIP code;
- g. Labor operation number;
- h. Problem code;
- i. Replacement part number(s) and description(s);
- j. Concern stated by customer; and
- k. Comment, if any, by dealer/technician relating to claim and/or repair.

Provide this information in Microsoft Access 2000, or a compatible format, entitled "RECALL DATA."

8. If any of the vehicles you identified in response to Request No. 7 above and Request No. 6 of DaimlerChrysler's March 31, 2004 response to the ODI information request in RQ04-001, required additional repairs, or were the subject of additional warranty claims, due to or in any relation to the alleged defect, after their repair under Safety Recall No. B24, please state the following as to each of those vehicles:

- a. DaimlerChrysler's claim number;
- b. Vehicle owner or fleet name (and fleet contact person) and telephone number;
- c. VIN;
- d. Repair date;
- e. Vehicle mileage at time of repair;
- f. Repairing dealer's or facility's name, telephone number, city and state or ZIP code;
- g. Labor operation number;
- h. Problem code;
- i. Replacement part number(s) and description(s);
- j. Concern stated by customer; and
- k. Comment, if any, by dealer/technician relating to claim and/or repair.

Provide this information in Microsoft Access 2000, or a compatible format, entitled "ADDITIONAL RECALL DATA."

In addition, state the total number of vehicles subject to these additional repairs or claims, and provide DaimlerChrysler's assessment as to why, or for what reason(s), these vehicles required, or were the subject of, additional repairs or claims.

9. Describe in detail the search criteria used by DaimlerChrysler to identify the claims identified in response to Request No. 5, including the labor operations, problem codes, part numbers and any other pertinent parameters used. Provide a list of all labor operations, labor operation descriptions, problem codes, and problem code descriptions applicable to the alleged defect in the subject vehicles. State, by model and model year, the terms of the new vehicle warranty coverage offered by DaimlerChrysler on the subject vehicles (i.e., the number of months and mileage for which coverage is provided and the vehicle systems that are covered). Describe any extended warranty coverage option(s) that DaimlerChrysler offered for the subject vehicles and state by option, model and model year, the number of vehicles that are covered under each such extended warranty.
10. Produce copies of all service, warranty, and other documents that relate to, or may relate to, the alleged defect in the subject vehicles that DaimlerChrysler has issued to any dealers, regional or zone offices, field offices, fleet purchasers, or other entities. This includes, but is not limited to, bulletins, advisories, informational documents, training documents, or other documents or communications, with the exception of standard shop manuals. Also, include the latest draft copy of any such communication that DaimlerChrysler is planning to issue within the next 120 days.
11. Furnish copies of all communications between DaimlerChrysler and each supplier of the subject components for the subject vehicles pertaining to the design, manufacture, performance, durability, quality, testing, or modification of the subject components that relate to, or may relate to, the alleged defect. If any communications on this subject were oral, provide a written transcript or summary of each such communication, and include a statement that identifies all participants and the date of the communication.
12. Describe all assessments, analyses, tests, 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, DaimlerChrysler. 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, whether final, tentative, or postulated.

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. If an action is not complete, provide a detailed schedule for the work to be done, tentative findings and/or conclusions, and provide an update within 10 days of completion of the action.

13. Describe all modifications or changes made by, or on behalf of, DaimlerChrysler in the design, material composition, manufacture, quality control, supply, or installation of the subject components, from the start of production to date, which relate to, or may relate to, the alleged defect in the subject vehicles. For each such modification or change, provide the following information:
- The date or approximate date on which the modification or change was incorporated into vehicle production;
 - A detailed description of the modification or change;
 - The reason(s) for the modification or change;
 - The part number(s) (service and engineering) of the original component;
 - The part number(s) (service and engineering) of the modified component;
 - Whether the original unmodified component was withdrawn from production and/or sale, and if so, when;
 - When the modified component was made available as a service component; and
 - Whether the modified component can be interchanged with earlier production components.

For each component part number, provide the supplier's name, address, and appropriate point of contact (name, title, and telephone number). Also identify by make, model and model year, any other vehicles of which DaimlerChrysler is aware that contain the identical component, whether installed in production or in service, and state the applicable dates of production or service usage.

14. Describe how the subject components are different in manufacture, design, material composition, quality control, or installation from the components that were recalled in Safety Recall No. B24.
15. In its May 18, 2001, response to an ODI information request in EA01-007, DaimlerChrysler reported that the clocksprings under investigation incorporated a locking tab system to ensure that the clocksprings could not rotate prior to installation of the steering wheel during the assembly process. In addition, DaimlerChrysler noted that the steering columns on the vehicles were equipped with pins that lock the columns in place so that rotation was not possible prior to connection of the columns to the steering intermediate shaft during the assembly process.

Please state whether the subject components incorporate, or are subject to, the same assembly processes as the previously investigated clocksprings and vehicles. If so, explain whether and how, if at all, the subject components can become uncentered or wound and unwound during the assembly process in light of the locking tabs and locking pins. If not, please describe what, if any, components or processes were present or incorporated into the subject components and subject vehicles to prevent or minimize any unwinding or winding of the subject components during the assembly process. Please then explain whether and how, if at all, the subject components can become uncentered or wound and unwound during the assembly process in light of these measures.

16. Describe how, if at all, the subject components in the subject vehicles are different from the driver's air bag clockspring assemblies provided in the MY 2001 versions of the subject vehicles.
17. Explain the basis for, and identify any information that demonstrates or supports, DaimlerChrysler's assertion that the terminal resistance issue it noted on the 7-circuit clockspring built into the subject vehicles "could likely have a substantial influence on the [subject vehicles'] complaint rate."
18. State whether DaimlerChrysler ever considered an alternative design(s) or component(s) or installation procedure for the subject components in the subject vehicles due to, or in any relation to, the alleged defect in the subject vehicles. If so, identify and describe each such alternative design or component or procedure, and state:
 - a. The date it was first proposed;
 - b. The disposition of that proposal (i.e., approved, disapproved, or still being evaluated); and
 - c. The reasons for that disposition.
19. Furnish DaimlerChrysler's assessment of the alleged defect in the subject vehicles, including:
 - a. The causal or contributory factor(s);
 - b. The failure mechanism(s);
 - c. The failure mode(s); and
 - d. The risk to motor vehicle safety that it poses.

This letter is being sent to DaimlerChrysler pursuant to 49 U.S.C. § 30166, which authorizes NHTSA to conduct any investigation that may be necessary to enforce Chapter 301 of Title 49 and to request reports and the production of things. It constitutes a new request for information. DaimlerChrysler's failure to respond promptly and fully to this letter could subject DaimlerChrysler to civil penalties pursuant to 49 U.S.C. § 30165 or lead to an action for injunctive relief pursuant to 49 U.S.C. § 30163. (Other remedies and sanctions are available as well.) Please note that maximum civil penalties under 49 U.S.C. § 30165 have increased as a result of the recent enactment of the Transportation Recall Enhancement, Accountability, and Documentation (TREAD) Act, Public Law No. 106-414 (signed November 1, 2000). Section 5(a) of the TREAD Act, codified at 49 U.S.C. § 30165(b), provides for civil penalties of up to \$5,000 per day, with a maximum of \$15 million for a related series of violations, for failing or refusing to perform an act required under 49 U.S.C. § 30166. This includes failing to respond to ODI information requests.

If DaimlerChrysler cannot respond to any specific request or subpart(s) thereof, please state the reason why it is unable to do so. If on the basis of attorney-client, attorney work product, or other privilege, DaimlerChrysler does not submit one or more requested documents or items of information in response to this information request, DaimlerChrysler must provide a privilege log identifying each document or item withheld, and stating the date, subject or title, the name

and position of the person(s) from, and the person(s) to whom it was sent, and the name and position of any other recipient (to include all carbon copies or blind carbon copies), the nature of that information or material, and the basis for the claim of privilege and why that privilege applies.

DaimlerChrysler's response to this letter, in duplicate, together with a copy of any confidentiality request, must be submitted to this office by September 3, 2004. Please refer to EA04-013 in DaimlerChrysler's response to this letter. If DaimlerChrysler finds that it is unable to provide all of the information requested within the time allotted, DaimlerChrysler must request an extension from Mr. Thomas Cooper at (202) 366-5218 no later than five business days before the response due date. If DaimlerChrysler is unable to provide all of the information requested by the original deadline, it must submit a partial response by the original deadline with whatever information DaimlerChrysler then has available, even if an extension has been granted.

If DaimlerChrysler claims that any of the information or documents provided in response to this information request constitute confidential commercial material within the meaning of 5 U.S.C. § 552(b)(4), or are protected from disclosure pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 1905, DaimlerChrysler must submit supporting information together with the materials that are the subject of the confidentiality request, in accordance with 49 CFR Part 512, as amended (68 Fed. Reg. 44209 et seq; July 28, 2003) to the Office of Chief Counsel (NCC-110), National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Room 5219, 400 Seventh Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20590. DaimlerChrysler is required to submit two copies of the documents containing allegedly confidential information (except only one copy of blueprints) and one copy of the documents from which information claimed to be confidential has been deleted.

If you have any technical questions concerning this matter, please call Mr. Michael Lee of my staff at (202) 366-5236.

Sincerely,



Kathleen C. DeMeter, Director
Office of Defects Investigation
Enforcement

Enclosures: 130 Vehicle Owner's Questionnaires

No.	VOQ	No	VOQ	No	VOQ	No	VOQ	No	VOQ
1	10058752	31	10067195	61	10076147	91	10060506	121	10078830
2	10056809	32	10067253	62	10076178	92	10060661	122	564273
3	10058024	33	10063239	63	10078345	93	10060703	123	10052369
4	10058206	34	10067555	64	10079462	94	10060738	124	10061037
5	10053397	35	10067616	65	10078822	95	10060848	125	10068307
6	10057761	36	10071732	66	10080055	96	10061836	126	10068421
7	10060947	37	10055465	67	10078963	97	10059211	127	10072326
8	10060031	38	10072055	68	785389	98	10064279	128	10072394
9	10061390	39	10072129	69	8023135	99	10066661	129	10073165
10	10061118	40	10072320	70	10004152	100	10065663	130	10078795
11	10057427	41	10072333	71	10009499	101	10061740		
12	10061486	42	10073351	72	10034382	102	10065843		
13	10061558	43	10061637	73	10037968	103	10065911		
14	10061816	44	10067350	74	10032266	104	10065942		
15	10061878	45	10073561	75	10048008	105	10067984		
16	10059281	46	10073598	76	10056625	106	10068002		
17	10055957	47	10073623	77	10059639	107	10068036		
18	10063347	48	10073708	78	10061090	108	10068516		
19	10063459	49	10068623	79	10071915	109	10072322		
20	10062635	50	10074192	80	10068263	110	10072444		
21	10063517	51	10074625	81	10076015	111	10065542		
22	10064808	52	10075460	82	10056594	112	10072947		
23	10064685	53	10073351	83	10056675	113	10073098		
24	10063820	54	10075775	84	10056703	114	10073158		
25	10063946	55	10075793	85	10057047	115	10073243		
26	10065113	56	10075902	86	10057117	116	10074805		
27	10065313	57	10075908	87	10058714	117	10075234		
28	10065351	58	10075914	88	10059641	118	10075276		
29	10059830	59	10075104	89	10058825	119	10073598		
30	10067020	60	10075323	90	10060111	120	10078744		