



U.S. Department  
of Transportation

National Highway  
Traffic Safety  
Administration

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

**CERTIFIED MAIL**  
**RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED**

NOV 18 2004

Ms. Gay Kent, Director  
Product Investigations  
General Motors Corporation  
Mail Code: 480-106-304  
30500 Mound Road  
Warren, MI 48090-9055

NVS-214gtb  
RQ04-010

Dear Ms. Kent:

This letter is to inform you that the Office of Defects Investigation (ODI) of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) is investigating the reason(s) that General Motors excluded 1998 and 1999 model year Sierra and Silverado vehicles from the vehicles addressed in Campaign 04V-129.

General Motors' Campaign 04V-129 offers replacement tailgate support cables for certain 2000 - 2004 model year Sierras and Silverados and for certain 2002 - 2004 model year Chevrolet Avalanche and Cadillac Escalade EXT vehicles. GM has not offered a Campaign remedy or other support for C/K vehicle models manufactured prior to October 1999 although ODI believes that these vehicles were equipped with identical or similar tailgate support cables as the vehicles included in the Campaign.

ODI has reviewed the information that General Motors ("GM") provided to the Agency on December 12, 2003, and notes that General Motors has identified 43 complaints and ten reports of injury incidents resulting in eleven injuries associated with broken tailgate support cable(s) in 1998 and 1999 model year Sierra and Silverado vehicles. A summary of the injury incidents that General Motors identified to the Agency in December 2003 is provided as Attachment A.

In addition to the information that General Motors has provided, ODI has received 30 complaints and seven (non-duplicate) reports of injury incidents associated with broken tailgate support cable(s) in 1998 and 1999 model year Sierra and Silverado vehicles. A summary of the injury incidents reported to the Office of Defects Investigation (ODI) is provided as Attachment B.



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In general, the injuries are alleged to have occurred when individuals who were seated or standing on the tailgate while loading or unloading the vehicle were jolted and/or dropped unexpectedly when the tailgate cable(s) broke.

During the course of ODI's investigation EA04-005, certain owners alleged that the tailgate had partially or completely separated from the vehicle while being driven after one or both of the tailgate support cables had broken. ODI is aware of one incident (VOQ 10081006, VIN 1GCEK14T4XEXXXXXX) relevant to RQ04-010 in which a partial (one side) tailgate separation is alleged to have occurred in a 1999 Silverado. Attachment C provides some additional information about this report.

Although ODI is not aware of any injuries associated with a tailgate partially or completely separating from a vehicle, ODI is concerned that a partially or completely separated tailgate could pose an unexpected road hazard to trailing vehicles or to other vehicles in the proximity of the separation event.

The purpose of this letter is to request certain information from General Motors about the tailgate support cables installed in model year 1998 and 1999 Sierra and Silverado vehicles.

ODI will be issuing a separate request for similar information pertaining to model years 1998-2004 Sonoma and S10 model vehicles since these vehicles were also equipped with tailgate support cables made of materials and construction similar to the tailgate support cables installed in model year 2000-2004 Sierras and Silverados.

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

- **Subject vehicles:** all 1998 and 1999 model year Sierra and Silverado vehicles equipped with a tailgate support cables similar in material and construction to the tailgate cables installed in General Motors model years 2000-2004 Sierra and Silverado vehicles and model years 2002-2004 Avalanche and Cadillac Escalade EXT vehicles which are the subject of General Motors' Campaign 04V-129.
- **Subject component(s):** tailgate support cable(s).
- **General Motors Corporation ("GM");** 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 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 GM (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:** One or both tailgate support cables breaking.
  
- **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 GM, 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 GM 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," "fire," "fleet," "good will," "make," "model," "model year," "notice," "property damage," "property damage claim," "rollover," "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 GM has previously provided a document to ODI, GM 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 GM's response to each request, identify the source of the information and indicate the last date the information was gathered.

To the extent possible, provide the requested information in Microsoft Access 2000 electronic format.

Note: GM provided ODI with owner complaint, injury, fatality, and warranty information and supporting details on December 12, 2003. The following Requests (Nos. 1-5) require GM to provide only incremental complaint, injury, fatality, and warranty information (i.e., information that GM has received since December 12, 2003, and/or relevant information that GM has not previously provided to the Agency).

Updated Complaint Information for 1998 and 1999 model year Sierra and Silverado vehicles -

1. State the number of each of the following, received by GM, or of which GM is otherwise aware, which relate to, or may relate to, the alleged defect in the subject vehicles received by General Motors since December 12, 2003, (i.e. this request excludes information regarding the alleged defect that has been previously provided to the Agency) pertaining to:
  - (a) Consumer complaints, including those from fleet operators;
  - (b) Field reports, including dealer field reports;
  - (c) Reports involving an 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) Reports 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;
  - (e) Property damage claims; and
  - (f) Third-party arbitration proceedings where GM is or was a party to the arbitration; and
  - (g) Lawsuits, both pending and closed, in which GM 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 are to be counted as a field report and a consumer complaint).

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

Provide this information in Microsoft Access 2000, or a compatible format, entitled "REQUEST NUMBER ONE, RQ04-010 – 1998-1999 SIERRA-SILVERADO COMPLAINT DATA." Please provide the data in the same Access format that GM used to provide information requested in PE03-049.

2. Separately, for each item (complaint, report, claim, notice, or matter) within the scope of the response to Request No. 1, state the following information:
  - (a) GM's file number or other identifier used;
  - (b) The category of the item, as identified in Request No. 1 (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 property damage is alleged;
  - (j) Number of alleged injuries, if any; and
  - (k) Number of alleged fatalities, if any.

Provide this information in Microsoft Access 2000, or a compatible format, entitled "REQUEST NUMBER TWO, RQ04-010 -- 1998-1999 SIERRA-SILVERADO COMPLAINT DETAILS DATA." Please provide the data in the same Access format that GM used to provide information requested in PE03-049.

3. Produce copies of all documents related to each item within the scope of Request No. 1. Organize the documents separately by category (i.e., consumer complaints, field reports, etc.) and describe the method GM used for organizing the documents.
4. State, by model and model year, a total count for all of the following categories of claims, collectively, that have been paid by GM 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) GM'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 "REQUEST NUMBER FOUR, RQ04-010 -- 1998-1999 SIERRA-SILVERADO WARRANTY DATA." Please provide the data in the same Access format that GM used to provide information requested in PE03-049.

5. Describe in detail the search criteria used by GM to identify the claims identified in response to Request No. 4, 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 make and model year, the terms of the new vehicle warranty coverage offered by GM 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 GM 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.
6. Produce copies of all service, warranty, and other documents that relate to, or may relate to, the alleged defect in the subject vehicles, that GM 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 communication that GM is planning to issue within the next 120 days.
7. Describe all of the significant differences between
  - (a) 1998 and 1999 model year Sierra and Silverado vehicles (i.e., vehicles equipped with identical or similar tailgate support cables as 2000-2004 Sierra and Silverado vehicles but which were not included in Campaign 04V-129) and
  - (b) model year 2000 through 2004 Sierra and Silverado vehicles manufactured between October 1999 and October 2003 (i.e., vehicles that are the subject of Campaign 04V-129).

For each of the differences identified, provide GM's assessment of the effects that these differences are expected to have on:

- (1) tailgate support cable integrity (e.g. endurance and fatigue properties, environmental resistance properties, in-use reliability, forecasted useful life, etc.);

- (2) the consequences of one or both tailgate cables breaking (e.g. the magnitude of the potential door drop (displacement) and/or other vehicle design considerations that could mitigate the risk or severity of injuries); and
- (3) indications or warnings that a product failure (breakage) was imminent.

Where possible, support these assessments with quantified data and provide copies of the supporting documentation.

8. Describe the rationale (list and explain the reasons) that led GM to exclude model year 1998 and 1999 Sierra and Silverado vehicles from receiving the same remedy as vehicles manufactured between October 1999 and October 2003 (i.e. vehicles that are the subject of Campaign 04V-129).
9. 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, GM. 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.

10. Furnish General Motors' assessment of the alleged defect in the subject component, including:
  - (a) The failure mechanism(s);
  - (b) The failure mode(s),
  - (c) The risk to motor vehicle safety that posed
  - (d) What warnings, if any, the operator and the other persons both inside and outside the vehicle would have that the alleged defect was occurring or subject component was malfunctioning.

This letter is being sent to GM 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. GM's failure to respond promptly and fully to this letter could subject GM 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.

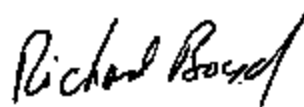
If GM cannot respond to any specific request or subpart(s) thereof, please state the reason why it is unable to do so. If on the basis of attorney-client, attorney work product, or other privilege, GM does not submit one or more requested documents or items of information in response to this information request, GM 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.

GM's response to this letter, in duplicate, together with a copy of any confidentiality request, must be submitted to this office by **January 15, 2005**. Please refer to **RQ04-010** in GM's response to this letter. If GM finds that it is unable to provide all of the information requested within the time allotted, GM must request an extension from me at (202) 366-4933 no later than five business days before the response due date. If GM 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 GM then has available, even if an extension has been granted.

If GM 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, GM 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-113), National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Room 5219, 400 Seventh Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20590. GM 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 Tom Bowman of my staff at (202) 366-6961.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Boyd". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "R".

Richard P. Boyd, Chief  
Medium & Heavy Duty Vehicle Division  
Office of Defects Investigation

Enclosure 1, Attachments A - C

**RQ04-010**  
**Attachment A**  
**Sheet 1 of 1**

**Summary of Personal Injuries allegedly caused by  
Tail Gate Dropping unexpectedly due to tailgate support cable breaking in  
1998 and 1999 model year Sierra and Silverado Vehicles.  
General Motors reported these incidents to ODI on  
December 12, 2003 (PE03-049).**

Model Year	Make	Model	VIN	Incident Date	Date Reported	Injuries
1998	Chevrolet	Silverado Ext 4WD	1GCEK19R1WRXXXXXX	NA	10/28/1999	1
1998	Chevrolet	Silverado Ext 4WD	1GCEK19R8WEXXXXXX	11/07/2000	11/08/2000	1
1998	GMC	Sierra Ext Cab 4WD	1GTEK19RXWRXXXXXX	02/14/2003	02/14/2003	1
1998	Chevrolet	Silverado Ext 4WD	2GCEK19R8W1XXXXXX	12/15/2000	01/05/2001	1
**1998	Chevrolet	Silverado Ext 4WD	2GCEK19R8W1XXXXXX	04/08/2002	05/08/2002	1
1999	Chevrolet	Silverado Ext 2WD	1GCEC19TPXZXXXXXX	06/21/2001	11/30/2001	1
1999	Chevrolet	Silverado Reg 4WD	1GCEK14T5XEXXXXXX	06/08/2003	08/16/2003	1
1999	Chevrolet	Silverado Ext 4WD	1GCGK29UXXZXXXXXX	06/09/2002	06/10/2002	1
1999	Chevrolet	Silverado Ext 2WD	2GCEC19T5X1XXXXXX	10/11/2003	10/14/2003	1
1999	GMC	Sierra Ext Cab 4WD	2GTEK19TXX1XXXXXX	10/28/2001	10/30/2001	2
<b>Total</b>						<b>11</b>

To protect the privacy of the consumer, ODI has redacted (deleted) the final six digits of the VINs listed.

**RQ04-010**  
**Attachment B**  
**Sheet 1 of 1**

**Summary of Personal Injuries reported through VOQ caused by  
Tail Gate Dropping Unexpectedly due to tailgate support cable breaking in  
1998 and 1999 model year Sierra and Silverado Vehicles**

- Shaded cells indicate reports of personal injuries that ODI has verified through phone interviews.
- ODI has provided complete VIN numbers when the owners have approved the release of VIN information.
- ODI has redacted VINS (last six digits deleted) when the owners have not specifically permitted ODI to release the VIN information.

VOQ #	Vehicle	Verbatim Consumer Statement from ODI VOQ
10043887	1998 Sierra 2GTEK19R3W1X XXXXX	BROKEN TAIL GATE CABLES ON A 98 GMC K 1500 PICKUP.
10062667	1999 Silverado 2GCEK19T1X126 5446	MY 1999 CHEV P/U TAILGATE CABLE BROKE CAUSING MINOR INJURY. I NOTICED AN ARTICLE RECALLING 2000-2004 GM'S. MY TRUCK WAS LESS THAN 3 YEARS OLD WHEN THE CABLE FAILED. 1999 GM VEHICLES SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN THE RECALL.
10045457	1999 C/K Pick-up 2GTBK19TXX1X XXXXX	SIMULTANEOUSLY BROKEN TAILGATE CABLES RESULTING IN SEVERE PINCHING OF HAND CAUSING SWELLING AND PAIN.
9005863	1999 Silverado 1GCEK14V6XEX XXXXX	TAIL GATE CABLE FAILED
10058972	1998 C/K Pick-up 2GCEK19R9W1X XXXXX	TAILGATE CABLES BROKE WHILE LOADING FURNITURE ONTO TRUCK. DAMAGED TRUCK BED AND INJURED TWO FAMILY MEMBERS FROM THE CABLES BREAKING UPON LOADING FURNITURE INTO BED OF FAIRLY NEW TRUCK WITH ONLY 30 THOUSAND MILES ON IT. (29,995).
10067781	1999 Sierra 2GTEC19V4X155 1614	CORROSION IN TAILGATE RESTRAINT STRAPS CAUSED FAILURE WHILE SITTING ON TAILGATE TO UNLOAD SEWING MACHINE. MINOR INJURY TO PERSON. NO DAMAGE TO SEWING MACHINE. MINOR

		DAMAGE TO TAILGATE. LOOKING FOR REPLACEMENT STRAPS. (G.M. DEALER INSISTS STRAPS CANNOT BE PURCHASED SEPERATELY. PURCHASE OF COMPLETE LATCH ASSEMBLY REQUIRED AT 40 DOLLARS PER SIDE).
10089286	1999 Silverado 2GCEK19T4X129 8151	THE CONSUMER STATED THAT THE STRAPS WHICH HELD THE TAILGATE IN PLACE BROKE, FORCING THE DRIVER TO FALL TO THE GROUND INJURING HIMSELF. THE OWNER CONTACTED THE MANUFACTURER AND WAS TOLD THAT ONLY THE TRUCKS FROM 2000 TO 2004 WERE BEING RECALLED. HOWEVER, THIS PROBLEM IS OCCURRING IN OTHER MODELS AS WELL. PROVIDE FURTHER DETAILS.

**RQ04-010**  
**Appendix C**  
**Sheet 1 of 1**

**Summary of Partial Tailgate Separations reported through VOQ  
in 1998 and 1999 model year Sierra and Silverado vehicles  
manufactured prior to November, 1999.**

**ODI has verified the listed report through a phone interview**

Vehicle  
Dynamic

VOQ Number	Vehicle	Driving Circumstances
10062597	1999 Sierra 1GTEK19T5XE XXXXXX	Driving on country gravel road high speed (partial separation)  "...I had one incident of the tail gate falling off ..."