



U.S. Department  
of Transportation  
**National Highway  
Traffic Safety  
Administration**

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

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

JAN 24 2006

Daniel Selke, Director  
Safety Engineering  
Mercedes-Benz of North America, Inc.  
One Mercedes Dr, P.O. Box 350  
Montvale, New Jersey 07645-0350

NVS-212-pco  
PE04-081

Dear Mr. Daniel Selke,

The Office of Defects Investigation (ODI) of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) is conducting an investigation (PE04-081) of alleged inadvertent deployment of side-impact airbag/curtains in certain model year 2001 - 2003 VW Jetta, Golf and GTI vehicles manufactured by Volkswagen of America. For a comparative assessment, we are requesting information concerning certain Mercedes Benz vehicles equipped with side airbags (peer vehicles).

Unless otherwise stated in the text, the following definitions apply to this information request:

- **Subject peer vehicles:** all model year (MY) 2001 - 2003 Mercedes Benz vehicles, with curb weight between 2,500 to 3,500 pounds, equipped with both side-impact/curtain airbags (including the combination thorax/head airbag) and manufactured for sale or lease in the United States.
- **Subject condition:** inadvertent deployment (deployment without a physical side impact or crash) of side-impact airbag/curtains.

**Mercedes Benz:** Mercedes-Benz of North America, Inc., Daimler-Chrysler Corporation, Daimler-Chrysler AG, 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 Mercedes Benz (including all business units and persons previously referred to), who are or, in or after September 1, 1999, were involved in any way with any of the following related to the subject condition in the subject peer vehicles:



- a. Design, engineering, analysis, modification or production (e.g. quality control);  
Testing, assessment or evaluation;



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888-DASH-2-DOT  
888-327-4288

- 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.
- **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 Mercedes Benz, 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 Mercedes Benz 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 subject condition, certain information is required. Pursuant to 49 U.S.C. § 30166, please provide numbered responses to the following information requests. Insofar as Mercedes Benz has previously provided a document to ODI, Mercedes Benz 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 Mercedes Benz'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 peer vehicles Mercedes Benz has manufactured for sale or lease in the United States. If there are multiple side air bag system designs or versions for a given subject peer vehicle, please identify under section "e." Separately, for each model subject vehicle manufactured to date by Mercedes Benz, state the following:
  - a. Vehicle identification number (VIN);
  - b. Make;
  - c. Model;
  - d. Model Year;
  - e. Airbag system model version (if more than one),
  - f. Date 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 table in Microsoft Access 2000, or a compatible format, entitled "PRODUCTION DATA."

2. State the number of each of the following, received by Mercedes Benz, or of which Mercedes Benz is otherwise aware, which relate to, or may relate to, the subject condition in the subject peer 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 (including own vehicle); and

- e. Third-party arbitration proceedings where Mercedes Benz is or was a party to the arbitration; and
- f. Lawsuits, both pending and closed, in which Mercedes Benz 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). Identify reports that have a duplicate with either other mfg reports/claims or with ODI.

In addition, for items "b" through "f," provide a summary description of the alleged problem and causal and contributing factors and Mercedes Benz's assessment of the problem, with a summary of the significant underlying facts and evidence along with any photographs and airbag control module diagnostic result/readout/printout (along with explanation/description). 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.

3. State, by model and model year, the number and total count for all of the following categories of claims, collectively, that have been paid by Mercedes Benz to date that relate to, or may relate to, the subject condition in the subject peer 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.

Provide this information in Microsoft Excel table, or a compatible format, entitled "WARRANTY DATA COUNT."

4. Describe in detail the search criteria used by Mercedes Benz to identify the claims identified in response to Request No. 3, 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 subject condition in the subject peer vehicles. State, by make and model year, the terms of the new vehicle warranty coverage offered by Mercedes Benz on the subject peer vehicles (i.e., the number of months and mileage for which coverage is provided and the vehicle systems that are covered) and if it covers inadvertent side-airbag deployments (without an actual side crash, but sensors did sense a shock pulse). Describe any extended warranty coverage option(s) that Mercedes Benz offered for the subject peer vehicles and state by option, model, and model year, the number of vehicles that are covered under each such extended warranty and if it covers inadvertent side-airbag deployments.
5. Provide a table showing the following information concerning the side-impact airbag systems in the subject peer vehicles by model and model year:
  - a. type of side air bag system (thorax, head, curtain or combination thereof);

- b. location of each seating position at which a side air bag system is installed;
  - c. the number of side air bags at each of those seating positions; and
  - d. bag location (seat mounted, door mounted, etc.)
6. For each model, model year of the subject peer vehicles, identify the supplier of the side-impact crash sensing system and electronic restraint module. Please provide a complete street address, contact name, and telephone number for each supplier identified.

This letter is being sent to Mercedes Benz 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. Mercedes Benz's failure to respond promptly and fully to this letter could subject Mercedes Benz 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 Mercedes Benz 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, Mercedes Benz does not submit one or more requested documents or items of information in response to this information request, Mercedes Benz 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.

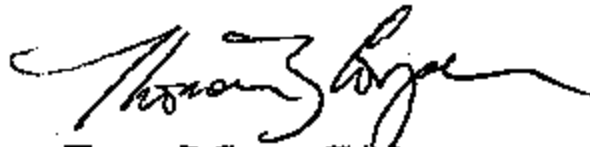
Mercedes Benz's response to this letter, in duplicate (including color photographs, diagrams and drawings), together with a copy of any confidentiality request, must be submitted to this office by February 21, 2005. Please refer to PE04-081 in Mercedes Benz's response to this letter. If Mercedes Benz finds that it is unable to provide all of the information requested within the time allotted, Mercedes Benz must request an extension from me at (202) 366-5218 no later than five business days before the response due date. If Mercedes Benz 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 Mercedes Benz then has available, even if an extension has been granted.

If Mercedes Benz 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, Mercedes Benz 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 (69 Fed. Reg. 21409 et

seq; April 21, 2004), to the Office of Chief Counsel (NCC-113), National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Room 5219, 400 Seventh Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20590. Mercedes Benz is required to submit two copies of the documents containing allegedly confidential information 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 Peter Ong of my staff at (202) 366-0583.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thomas Z. Cooper". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Thomas Z. Cooper, Chief  
Vehicle Integrity Division  
Office of Defects Investigation