



ODI RESUME

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

Investigation: DP05-003
Prompted By: Defect Petition
Date Opened: 08/08/ Date Closed: 12/09/2005
Principal Investigator: Kyle Bowker
Subject: Alleged Premature Tie Rod Failure

Manufacturer: Volkswagen of America, Inc.
Products: 1999 Volkswagen Passat
Population: 22,417

Problem Description: The petitioner alleges that certain subject vehicles not included in recalls 99V-248 and 00V-414 are affected by the same defective tie rods.

FAILURE REPORT SUMMARY

	ODI	Manufacturer	Total
Complaints:	14	182	191
Crashes/Fires:	0	0	0
Injury Incidents:	0	0	0
# Injuries:	0	0	0
Fatality Incidents:	0	0	0
# Fatalities:	0	0	0
Other*:	0	0	0

*Description Of Other:

Action: This petition has been denied.

Engineer: Kyle M. Bowker KMB
Div. Chief: Jeffrey L. Quandt
Office Dir.: Kathleen C. DeMeter

Date: 12/09/2005
Date: 12/09/2005
Date: 12/09/2005

Summary: On August 2, 2005, ODI received a petition submitted by Ms. Miriam Schneider of Olney, MD requesting an investigation of allegedly defective tie rods in certain model year (MY) 1999 Volkswagen Passat vehicles not included in two previous safety recall campaigns (identified henceforth as the subject vehicles). In a September 1999 letter, Volkswagen of America, Inc. (VW) notified the agency that an undetermined percentage of MY 1998-1999 Volkswagen Passat and Audi A4, A6, and A8 vehicles contained a safety-related defect affecting aluminum tie rod ends in the steering system. VW indicated that it was possible that some tie rods would not seal properly which could allow moisture and dust particles to enter the swivel bearing mechanism, resulting in premature wear. The approximately 22,200 Volkswagen and 29,700 Audi vehicles affected by this recall (identified by NHTSA Recall No. 99V-248) were built from January 1998 through July 1998 and fell within a specific Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) range.

In November 2000, VW chose to expand the scope of the recall (identified by NHTSA Recall No. 00V-414) after it determined that some potentially defective aluminum tie rod ends may have been installed in an additional 44,000 Volkswagen and 39,000 Audi vehicles built from August 1998 through April 1999. These subject recall actions were not influenced by ODI. Instead, VW made an independent determination to conduct a recall after German vehicle inspection authorities notified it of "worn" tie rods and factory inspection of some "worn" tie rods revealed improper sealing.

Continued on next page.

KMB
12/9/05

Summary continued:

According to a December 2004 report, the petitioner brought her MY 1999 Passat to an authorized Volkswagen dealer for an unrelated recall repair where she was notified by service personnel that, after 59,000 miles traveled, the tie rods "have too much play," and the recommended repairs would not be covered free of charge because her VIN (WVWNA63B1XE499116) was outside the recall range. In June 2005, after 65,400 miles traveled, the petitioner paid \$588.59 to replace worn inner and outer tie rod ends on both sides of the vehicle. The petition letter specifically requests that the scope of VW's recall be expanded to include the petitioner's vehicle and that she be reimbursed for the cost of the repairs.

There are a total of 191 non-duplicative complaints to ODI and VW that allege premature wear of either one or both outer tie rod ends in the subject vehicles. As of November 18, 2005, ODI is not aware of any allegations of tie rod separations resulting in a loss of vehicle control, crash or injury in the subject vehicles.

The petitioner's vehicle was manufactured on June 8, 1999 using revised steel tie rod ends and therefore was already equipped with the tie rod ends used to remedy defective vehicles in the subject recalls. Analysis indicates that there does not appear to be a safety-related defect trend with respect to the steel tie rod ends used in the subject vehicles.

In view of the foregoing, it is unlikely that NHTSA would issue an order for the notification and remedy of the alleged defect as defined by the petitioner at the conclusion of the investigation requested in the petition. Therefore, in view of the need to allocate and prioritize NHTSA's limited resources to best accomplish the agency's safety mission, the petition is denied.