



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

ODI RESUME

Investigation: PE06-004
Date Opened: 01/06/2006 Date Closed: 05/31/2006
Principal Investigator: Kyle Bowker
Subject: Front Suspension Ball Joint Separation

Manufacturer: DaimlerChrysler Corporation
Products: 2004 Jeep Liberty
Population: 173,664

Problem Description: Alleged front suspension lower ball joint separation while driving.

FAILURE REPORT SUMMARY

	ODI	Manufacturer	Total
Complaints:	25	76	93
Crashes/Fires:	0	1	1
Injury Incidents:	0	2	2
# Injuries:	0	2	2
Fatality Incidents:	0	0	0
# Fatalities:	0	0	0
Other*:	0	1,396	1,396

*Description Of Other: Warranty claims paid to replace or repair the front suspension lower ball joint for any or unspecified cause.

Action: This Preliminary Evaluation has been upgraded to an Engineering Analysis (EA06-008).

Engineer: Kyle M. Bowker KMB

Date: 05/31/2006

Div. Chief: Jeffrey L. Quandt

Date: 05/31/2006

Office Dir.: Kathleen C. DeMeter

Date: 05/31/2006

Summary: On January 6, 2006, the Office of Defects Investigation (ODI) opened a Preliminary Evaluation to investigate alleged front suspension lower ball joint separation while driving in certain model year (MY) 2004 Jeep Liberty vehicles. ODI sent a letter to the manufacturer on February 7, 2006 requesting information about these and other Jeep Liberty vehicles.

ODI is aware of 93 non-duplicative complaints that allege involuntary front suspension lower ball joint separation in the subject vehicles. ODI is also aware of two alleged injury incidents related to the alleged defect (one crash incident and one non-crash incident), both resulting in minor injury.

The manufacturer conducted a prior safety recall (03V-460) to address the subject issue in certain MY 2002-03 Jeep Liberty vehicles. According to DaimlerChrysler's Defect Information Report to the agency (in accordance with 49 CFR Part 573) dated November 4, 2003, "the constant tension lower control arm ball joints may experience a loss of lubrication which can lead to corrosion, accelerated wear and possibly separation from the steering knuckle. A constant tension ball joint which has separated from the knuckle may result in loss of vehicle directional control with minimal advanced warning." The manufacturer has made numerous changes in the design, material composition, manufacture, quality control, supply, and installation of the subject ball joints since the prior safety recall was initiated in an effort to improve performance with respect to sealing, lubrication, and joint retention capability.

The manufacturer's investigation into alleged front suspension lower ball joint separation is ongoing. Accordingly, this investigation has been upgraded to an Engineering Analysis (EA06-008) to further study the frequency and scope of the alleged defect and the adequacy of the remedy provided by the prior safety recall.

KMB
5-31-06