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

ODI RESUME

Investigation: EA06-007
Prompted By: PE06-002
Date Opened: 05/09/2006
Principal Investigator: Kyle Bowker
Subject: Fuel Tank Leakage

Manufacturer: Kia Motors America, Inc.
Products: 1996-2002 Kia Sportage
Population: 268,137

Problem Description: The steel fuel storage tank allegedly leaks.

FAILURE REPORT SUMMARY

	ODI	Manufacturer	Total
Complaints:	7	71	71
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	2,403	2,403

*Description Of Other: Warranty claims paid to replace or repair the fuel storage tank for any or unspecified cause.

Action: An Engineering Analysis has been opened.

Engineer: *Kyle M. Bowker* KMB Date: *05/09/2006*
Div. Chief: *Jeffrey L. Quandt* Date: *05/09/2006*
Office Dir.: *Kathleen C. DeMeter* Date: *05/09/2006*

Summary: On January 4, 2006, the Office of Defects Investigation (ODI) opened a Preliminary Evaluation to investigate alleged fuel leakage from the steel fuel storage tank in certain model year (MY) 1999-2000 Kia Sportage vehicles. ODI sent a letter to the manufacturer on January 25, 2006 requesting information about these and other Kia Sportage vehicles. Consequently, the range of subject vehicles under investigation has been expanded to include all Sportage vehicles which use the same or substantially similar steel fuel storage tank.

ODI is aware of 71 non-duplicative complaints that allege fuel storage tank leakage in MY 1996-2002 subject vehicles. Analysis of manufacturer data indicates that alleged fuel leakage at or near the storage tank may be attributed to several different failure modes involving the fuel containment and distribution system.

Kia has identified corrosion as a primary causal factor related to fuel storage tank complaints and continued fuel system part sales. According to Kia, fuel tank corrosion claims related to leakage can be divided into two categories: lower tank claims associated with exterior corrosion due to disruption of the polyvinyl chloride (PVC) protective coating and upper tank claims associated with corrosion at the fuel sending unit mounting plate area.

The manufacturer's investigation into alleged fuel tank corrosion resulting in leakage is ongoing. Accordingly, this investigation has been upgraded to an Engineering Analysis to further study the frequency, scope, and safety consequences of the alleged defect.

KMB
5-9-06