



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

NOV 21 2008

1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20590

CERTIFIED MAIL
RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED

Ms. Gay P. Kent, Director
Product Investigations
General Motors Corporation
30001 Van Dyke - Mail Code 480-210-G11
Warren, MI 48090-9010

NVS-213cnl
PE08-061

Dear Ms. Kent:

This letter is to inform you that the Office of Defects Investigation (ODI) of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has opened a Preliminary Evaluation (PE08-061) to investigate allegations of timing chain breakage resulting in engine stall with no restart in certain model year (MY) 2000 through 2002 Saturn L-series manufactured by General Motors, and to request certain information about these vehicles and similarly equipped peer vehicles.

Since the closing of EA06-009, ODI has received 124 complaints from Saturn L-Series owners that experienced a timing chain failure but were not included in GM's recall for vehicles equipped with the L61 2.2L engine built from the beginning of November 2000 through the end of February 2001. In addition ODI has received a total of 38 owner complaints which allege timing chain failure for similarly equipped peer vehicles such as the Saturn Vue, Oldsmobile Alero and Pontiac Sunfire.

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

- **Subject vehicles:** all MY 2000 through 2003 Saturn L-series vehicles equipped with 2.2L L61 engines, manufactured for sale or lease in the United States and not included in the subject recall.
- **Peer vehicles:** all MY 2002 through 2003 Saturn VUE and ION, Chevrolet Cavalier, Pontiac Sunfire and Grand Am, and Oldsmobile Alero vehicles equipped with 2.2L L61 engines that were manufactured for sale or lease in the United States and are within the scope of the subject service bulletin or the peer vehicle service bulletin.
- **Vehicle sub-populations:** the following sets of vehicles that are covered by the subject service bulletin or the peer vehicle service bulletin:
 1. MY 2001 Saturn L-series vehicles recalled in 07V-519;
 2. Subject Saturn L-series vehicles built before the recall population;

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3. Subject Saturn L-series vehicles built after the recall population and before the subject design changes were implemented in vehicle production;
 4. Subject Saturn L-series vehicles built after the subject design changes were implemented in vehicle production; and
 5. Each model of peer vehicles built before the subject design changes were implemented in vehicle production.
- **Subject assembly:** Timing chain assembly, including timing chain oil nozzle.
 - **Subject design changes:** The design changes to the oil nozzle and timing chain assembly that were identified in GM's response to Request 9 of ODI's information request letter for PE06-009 (GM 686). The GM response indicated that the changes were implemented in production on April 22, 2002 (Tonawanda) and May 1, 2002 (Springhill).
 - **Subject service bulletin:** GM technical service bulletin 03-06-01-017 (June 9, 2003), "Service Information - Timing Chain Design Change and Revised Service Procedures."
 - **Peer vehicle service bulletin:** GM technical service bulletin PI00434A (March 22, 2004), "2.2 L61 Engine Crank, No Start."
 - **Subject recall:** NHTSA Recall No. 07V-519.
 - **GM:** General Motors Corporation, 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 January 1, 2000, 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:** Timing chain failure.
 - **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.

1. State, by model and model year, the number of subject and peer vehicles GM has manufactured for sale or lease in the United States. Separately, for each subject vehicle manufactured to date by GM, state the following:
 - a. Vehicle identification number (VIN);
 - b. Make;
 - c. Model;
 - d. Model Year;
 - e. Plant of manufacture;
 - 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 2003, or a compatible format, entitled "PRODUCTION DATA." See Enclosure 1, Data Collection Disc, for a pre-formatted table that provides further details regarding this submission.

2. 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 and peer vehicles:
 - a. Consumer complaints, including those from fleet operators;
 - b. Consumer complaints, including those from operators, where a vehicle stall was reported
 - c. Field reports, including dealer field reports;
 - d. Field reports, including dealer field reports where a vehicle stall was reported;
 - e. 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;
 - f. Property damage claims;
 - g. Third-party arbitration proceedings where GM is or was a party to the arbitration; and
 - h. Lawsuits, both pending and closed, in which GM is or was a defendant or codefendant.

For subparts "a" through "f" 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).

In addition, for items "e" through "h," 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 g and h, 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. Separately, for each item (complaint, report, claim, notice, or matter) within the scope of your response to Request No. 2, state the following information:
 - a. GM's file number or other identifier used;
 - b. The category of the item, as identified in Request No. 2 (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 any warning lights were illuminated at the time the alleged defect occurred;
 - j. Whether the vehicle was towed into the dealership;
 - k. Whether the vehicle stalled as a result of the alleged defect;
 - l. Whether the driver was able to restart the vehicle, after the vehicle stalled;
 - m. If the driver was able to restart the vehicle after stalling, what amount of time did it take;
 - n. Diagnostic Trouble Code(s) (DTCs) indicated at the time of repair;
 - o. Repair(s) dealer made to the vehicle;
 - p. Whether a crash is alleged;
 - q. Whether property damage is alleged;
 - r. Number of alleged injuries;
 - s. Number of alleged fatalities; and
 - t. A summary of the incident.

Provide this information in Microsoft Access 2003, or a compatible format, entitled "REQUEST NUMBER TWO DATA." See Enclosure 1, Data Collection Disc, for a pre-formatted table that provides further details regarding this submission.

4. Produce copies of all documents related to each item within the scope of Request No. 2. Organize the documents separately by category (i.e., consumer complaints, field reports, etc.) and describe the method GM used for organizing the documents.
5. State, by model and model year, total counts for all of the following categories of claims, collectively, that have been paid by GM to date that relate to repair or replacement of the timing chain in the subject and peer vehicles: warranty claims; extended warranty claims; claims for good will services; and field, zone, or similar adjustments and reimbursements. This should include all claims made in accordance with procedures specified in service bulletins issued by GM related to the subject components.

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. Whether there was a claim for towing within three days before or after the subject claim (yes/no);
- h. Whether there is any other reference to towing in the claim (yes/no);
- i. Labor operation number;
- j. Problem code;
- k. Diagnostic Trouble Code(s) (DTCs) indicated at the time of repair;
- l. Replacement part number(s) and description(s);
- m. Concern stated by customer;
- n. Comment, if any, by dealer/technician relating to claim and/or repair;
- o. GM's assessment of whether the claim was associated with an engine stall while driving incident; and
- p. If the claim is not associated with an engine stall incident, state the reason for the repair (e.g., no start, noise, driveability, check engine light, and others as appropriate).

Provide this information in Microsoft Access 2003, or a compatible format, entitled "WARRANTY DATA." See Enclosure 1, Data Collection Disc, for a pre-formatted table that provides further details regarding this submission.

- 6. Describe in detail the search criteria used by GM to identify the claims identified in response to Request No. 5, 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.
- 7. 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.
- 8. 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.

9. State the number of subject components that GM has sold that may be used in the subject vehicles by part number (both service and engineering/production) and month/year of sale (*including the cut-off date for sales, if applicable*).

For each component part number, provide the supplier's name, address, and appropriate point of contact (name, title, and telephone number). Also identify by make, model and model year, all vehicle applications that use the component, whether installed in production or in service, and state the applicable dates of production or service usage.

10. Provide a table with the following information regarding actual timing chain failure frequencies for each vehicle sub-population as defined in this letter:
 - a. Vehicle production count;
 - b. Total complaints;
 - c. Total warranty claims;
 - d. For each of the following service intervals state the number of each sub-population that have reached that time-in-service and the number of complaints and warranty claims received within each service interval: 12-, 24-, 36-, 48-, 60-, and 72-months;
 - e. State GM's assessment of the percentages of timing chain complaints that involve stall while driving for each sub-population (alternatively, if GM does not believe that the percentages for the sub-populations are significantly different, state an approximate percentage that would apply to all);
 - f. For complaints that GM does not believe involve stall while driving, provide a breakdown of the percentages associated with other conditions (e.g., no start, noise, driveability, check engine light);
 - g. State GM's assessment of the percentages of timing chain warranty claims that involve stall while driving for each sub-population (alternatively, if GM does not believe that the percentages for the sub-populations are significantly different, state an approximate percentage that would apply to all); and
 - h. For warranty claims that GM does not believe involve stall while driving, provide a breakdown of the percentages associated with other conditions (e.g., no start, noise, driveability, check engine light).
11. Provide a table with the following information regard statistically estimated/modeled timing chain failure frequencies for each vehicle sub-population as defined in this letter:

- a. A short description of the method/model used for the statistical analysis, including the bases for selecting each method, explanations for any differences in modeling methods for different sub-populations, and the report period used for the analysis (e.g., warranty period);
 - b. Charts showing the model results for each sub-population;
 - c. The results of the analysis (e.g., slope and characteristic life parameters if a 2-parameter Weibull model is used);
 - d. The estimated failure rates at 12-, 24-, 36-, 48-, 60-, and 72-months-in-service.
12. Describe, and provide copies of all documents relating to, all owner surveys conducted to gather data about the number of timing chain warranty claims that involved engine stall and the circumstances associated with such stalls (e.g., vehicle speed, restart, comments regarding steering and/or braking difficulty, time of day, road and traffic conditions, whether the vehicle stopped in the road or coasted off the road, etc). Please summarize the results of all such surveys in a table and provide the data electronically.
 13. Explain how the scopes of the subject service bulletin and peer vehicle service bulletin were determined and why the bulletins appear to cover vehicles built before and after the subject design changes were implemented in production.
 14. Provide one sample each of the following:
 - a. The timing chain kits identified in the subject and peer vehicle service bulletins; and
 - b. Three samples of broken timing chains from subject vehicle warranty returns.
 15. Furnish GM's assessment of how each of the following aspects of the alleged defect for the vehicles covered by the subject recall are different in the other Saturn L-series vehicles that are the subject of this Preliminary Evaluation and the peer vehicles of this information request that use the same engine:
 - a. The causal or contributory factor(s);
 - b. The failure mechanism(s);
 - c. The failure mode(s);
 - d. The overall timing chain failure rates at the intervals identified in Requests 11 and 12;
 - e. The reason(s) for differences noted in 14.d;
 - f. The percentage of timing chain failures resulting in engine stall and the reason(s) for any differences noted;
 - g. The ability to restart a vehicle that has stalled due to the alleged defect;
 - h. The risk to motor vehicle safety that it poses;
 - i. 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; and
 - j. The reports included with this inquiry.

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 \$16,050,000 for a related series of violations, for failing or refusing to perform an act required under 49 U.S.C. § 30166. *See* 49 CFR 578.6 (as amended by 69 Fed. Reg. 57864 (Sept. 28, 2004)). This includes failing to respond to ODI information requests.

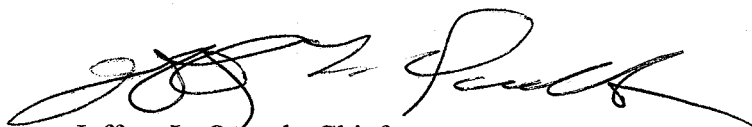
If GM cannot respond to any specific request or subpart(s) thereof, please state the reason why it is unable to do so. If on the basis of attorney-client, attorney work product, or other privilege, GM does not submit one or more requested documents or items of information in response to this information 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 28, 2008. Please refer to PE08-061 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) 366-5207 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 (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. 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 Chris Lash of my staff at (202) 366-2370.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeffrey L. Quandt", written in a cursive style.

Jeffrey L. Quandt, Chief
Vehicle Control Division
Office of Defects Investigation

Enclosure 1, One CD ROM titled Data Collection Disc and VOQs containing four files