



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

ODI RESUME

Investigation: DP08-002
Date Opened: 6/18/2008 Date Closed:
Principal Investigator: Chris Lash
Subject: Timing Chain Failure and Stall

Manufacturer: General Motors Corp.
Products: MY1999 -2003 Saturn L-series with 2.2L engine
Population: 412,000 (estimate)

Problem Description: The petitioner alleges receiving monthly complaints for timing chain failure, resulting in engine stall while driving with no restart.

FAILURE REPORT SUMMARY

	ODI	Manufacturer	Total
Complaints:	216	691	890
Crashes/Fires:	0	0	0
Injury Incidents:	0	0	0
Fatality Incidents:	0	0	0
Other*:	0	2,932	2,932

*Description of Other: Timing chain warranty claims

Action: The petition will be evaluated for a grant or deny decision.

Engineer: Chris Lash
Div. Chief: Jeffrey L. Quandt
Office Dir.: Kathleen C. DeMeter

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Summary: In a November 7, 2007 letter, General Motors submitted a defect information report to ODI concerning the recall of approximately 20,500 MY 2001 Saturn L-series vehicles with 2.2L engines that were built between Nov. 2000 and Feb. 2001 to correct a problem with timing chain link separation (recall 07V-519, ODI investigation EA06-009). Timing chain failure could result in engine stall while driving with no chance for a restart. The timing chain assembly used in the recalled vehicles was also used in approximately 391,600 other MY 1999 through 2003 Saturn L-series vehicles with 2.2L engines. However, while the recalled vehicles represented only about 5% of the total population, they experience an elevated "spike" in timing chain failures accounting for about 32% of the total complaints to ODI and GM (384 of 1,200) and 25% of total timing chain warranty claims (971 of 3,903) when EA06-009 was closed on November 9, 2007. The resulting incident rates when EA06-009 was closed were 1.9% vs 0.2% for complaints and 4.7% vs 0.7% for warranty claims, respectively, for the recalled and non-recalled populations.

On May 22, 2008, the North Carolina Consumers Council (NCCC) submitted a defect petition to ODI requesting the expansion of recall 07V-519 to include all MY 1999 through 2003 Saturn L-series vehicles with 2.2L engines using the same timing chain design as the recalled population. The petition states that NCCC continues to receive complaints from consumers that have had a timing chain fail in vehicles built outside the production range covered by the recall. The petition also notes that ODI has continued to receive complaints. Since the closing of EA06-009 ODI has received 51 new complaints from consumers who had a timing chain fail in a MY 1999 through 2003 Saturn L-series with the 2.2L engine that were not covered by recall 07V-519, bringing the current total to 216.

The petitioner notes that the vehicles that fall outside the recalled group have the same timing chain as the vehicles that were recalled and exhibit the same failure mode where the timing chain can break suddenly and without warning, resulting in engine damage and loss of motive power. Because of this, the petitioner believes that the original scope of the recall should be changed to include all vehicles built with the original timing chain part.

ODI will evaluate the petition for a grant or deny decision.