



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

1200 New Jersey Avenue SE.  
Washington, DC 20590

SEP 2 - 2009

**CERTIFIED MAIL**  
**RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED**

Thomas C. Baloga, Vice President  
Engineering-US  
BMW of North America, LLC  
P.O. Box 1227  
Westwood, NJ 07645-1227

NVS-212am  
PE09-036

Dear Mr. Baloga:

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 (PE09-036) to investigate allegations of rear lamp illumination failure in MY 2002-2005 BMW 3 Series sedans (E46) manufactured by BMW, and to request certain additional information.

This office has received 15 reports of rear lamp illumination failure in MY 2002-2005 BMW 3 Series sedans (E46). Eleven of these reports were previously submitted under DP09-002. The four additional reports will be emailed to your office. Complainant's state that the brake lamps, tail lamps, and turn signals in the rear lamp assembly are not functioning. The failure of the rear lamps is alleged to be due to heat related or other damage on an 8 pin electrical connector and associated ground wiring with the lamp assembly.

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

- **Subject vehicles:** All MY 2002-2005 BMW 3 Series Sedans (E46) manufactured for sale or lease in the United States.
- **Subject component:** The rear lamp assembly including the harness electrical connector and its associated male and female terminals, and the wiring and harness assembly itself, and any other subcomponents of the subject vehicle's rear lamp assembly that are used to power the rear lamps, including the bulbs, bulb holders, and any electrical circuits within the lamp assembly.
- **BMW:** Bayerische Motoren Werke AG, all of its past and present officers and employees, whether assigned to their principal offices or any of its field or other locations, including all of their 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 BMW (including all business units and persons previously referred to), who are or, in or after 1998, 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:** Loss of exterior rear lamp function.
  - **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 BMW, 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 BMW 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 BMW has previously provided a document to ODI, BMW 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. Make no distinction between individual models of sedans, i.e. classify all sedans as 3 Series and not 318i, 325i, 330i, M3 etc. After BMW's response to each request, identify the source of the information and indicate the last date the information was gathered. For questions 1-4, submit data since the request of the same data was submitted under DP09-002.

1. State the number of each of the following, received by BMW, or of which BMW is otherwise aware, which relate to, or may relate to, the alleged defect in the subject vehicles:
  - a. Consumer complaints, including those from fleet operators;
  - b. Field reports, including dealer field reports;
  - c. 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;
  - d. Reports involving a fire, 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;
  - e. Property damage claims; and
  - f. Third-party arbitration proceedings where BMW is or was a party to the arbitration; and
  - g. Lawsuits, both pending and closed, in which BMW is or was a defendant or codefendant.

For subparts “a” through “d” 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 "c" and "d," provide a summary description of the alleged problem and causal and contributing factors and BMW's assessment of the problem, with a summary of the significant underlying facts and evidence. For items "e" and "f," 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.

2. 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. BMW'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 a crash is alleged;
  - j. Whether a fire is alleged;
  - k. Whether property damage is alleged;
  - l. Number of alleged injuries, if any; and
  - m. Number of alleged fatalities, if any.

Provide this information in Microsoft Access 2000, or a compatible format, entitled "REQUEST NUMBER TWO DATA."

3. 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 BMW used for organizing the documents.
4. State, by model and model year, a total count for all of the following categories of claims, collectively, that have been paid by BMW to date that relate to, or may relate to, the alleged defect in the subject vehicles: warranty claims; extended warranty claims; claims for good will services that were provided; field, zone, or similar adjustments and reimbursements; and warranty claims or repairs made in accordance with a procedure specified in a technical service bulletin or customer satisfaction campaign.

Separately, for each such claim, state the following information:

- a. BMW'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. Labor operation number;
- h. Problem code;
- i. Replacement part number(s) and description(s);

- j. Concern stated by customer; and
- k. Comment, if any, by dealer/technician relating to claim and/or repair.

Provide this information in Microsoft Access 2000, or a compatible format, entitled "WARRANTY DATA."

5. Describe in detail the search criteria used by BMW to identify the claims identified in response to Request No. 4, 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 BMW 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 BMW 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.
6. Provide the following:
  - a. One sample of the original subject component including the lamp assembly, electrical connector, and a section of the harness assembly with the associated electrical terminals in situ, and,
  - b. Two samples of failed field returned subject components such as the lamp assembly, electrical connector, or the harness assembly (with terminals in situ).
7. Provide electrical schematics of the 8 pin electrical connector to the rear lamp assembly and the associated harnessing/componentry involved in the rear lighting circuitry for both rear lamps including the associated ground wiring as it relates to the rear lamp assembly. The schematics requested should include the following information:
  - a. all electrical devices involved in powering both rear lamp assemblies, including all mating connectors, pins and sockets, gang connectors, crimps, solder joints, ground points, and switches and other devices involved (i.e., anything that flows current for the rear lamps);
  - b. where on the vehicle (the location) the circuitry and devices identified in item a above are located, and;
  - c. which circuits and/or lamps the devices identified in item a above are involved.
8. Provide the following information regarding the rear lamp 8 pin connector assembly
  - a. the name of the component manufacturer;
  - b. the part numbers for both mating halves of the connector housings;
  - c. the part number for the male and female terminals (pins and sockets) specified for the housings;
  - d. the maximum power rating the connector manufacturer recommends for the terminals and connector housing (by terminal and cavity if needed); and,
  - e. the typical or average power that flows through each terminal (by cavity) during normal use of the vehicle, and as specified in the lighting system design.

9. Provide an engineering and/or mechanical drawing of the entire rear lamp assembly. The drawing should identify all circuit paths within the lighting assembly and all components within the lamp assembly that are powered (flow current), such as light bulbs, bulb holders, or buss devices, and should also identify the maximum power ratings for each circuit and component identified.
10. Explain the technical rationale behind the technical service bulletin (TSB) submitted to ODI during DP09-002, [BMW TSB Number SI B 63 03 06] and further explain how the TSB addresses and remedies the alleged defect. Also provide the maximum power rating and the typical power levels that occur in normal use for all components used in the repair the TSB specifies.
11. Furnish BMW's assessment of the alleged defect in the subject vehicle, including:
  - a. The causal or contributory factor(s);
  - b. The failure mechanism(s);
  - c. The failure mode(s);
  - d. The risk to motor vehicle safety that it poses;
  - e. 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
  - f. The reports included with this inquiry.

This letter is being sent to BMW 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. BMW's failure to respond promptly and fully to this letter could subject BMW 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.) Section 5(a) of the TREAD Act, codified at 49 U.S.C. § 30165(b), provides for civil penalties of up to \$6,000 per day, with a maximum of \$16,375,000 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 71 Fed. Reg. 28279 (May 16, 2006)). This includes failing to respond to ODI information requests.

If BMW 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, BMW does not submit one or more requested documents or items of information in response to this information request, BMW 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.

BMW's response to this letter, in duplicate, together with a copy of any confidentiality request, must be submitted to this office by October 16, 2009. **All business confidential information must be submitted directly to the Office of Chief Counsel as described in the following paragraph and should not be sent to this office.** In addition do not submit any business confidential information in the body of the letter submitted to this office. Please refer to PE09-036 in BMW's response to this letter and in any confidentiality request submitted to the Office of

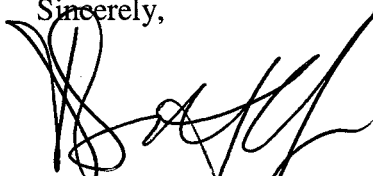
Chief Counsel. If BMW finds that it is unable to provide all of the information requested within the time allotted, BMW must request an extension from me at (202) 366-0139 no later than five business days before the response due date. If BMW is unable to provide all of the information requested by the original deadline, it must submit a partial response by the original deadline with whatever information BMW then has available, even if an extension has been granted.

If BMW 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, BMW 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, to the Office of Chief Counsel (NCC-111), National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Room W41-227, 1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E., Washington, D.C. 20590. BMW 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.** Please remember that the word "CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS INFORMATION" must appear at the top of each page containing information claimed to be confidential, and the information must be clearly identified in accordance with 5 U.S.C. § 512.6. If you submit a request for confidentiality for all or part of your response to this IR, that is in an electronic format (e.g., CD-ROM), your request and associated submission must conform to the new requirements in NHTSA's Confidential Business Information Rule regarding submissions in electronic formats (49 CFR 512.6(c)). See Federal Register, volume 72, page 59434 (October 19, 2007).

Please send email notification to Ali Motamedamin (Ali.Motamedamin@dot.gov) and to [ODI\\_IRresponse@dot.gov](mailto:ODI_IRresponse@dot.gov) when BMW sends its response to this office and indicate whether there is confidential information as part of BMW's response.

If you have any technical questions concerning this matter, please call Ali Motamedamin of my staff, at (202) 366-7021.

Sincerely,



D. Scott Yon, Chief  
Vehicle Integrity Division  
Office of Defects Investigation

9/2/09

Vehicle Owner Questionnaire Numbers:  
10265399 10277899 10267357 10272809