



U.S. Department
of Transportation

**National Highway
Traffic Safety
Administration**

ODI RESUME

Investigation: RQ 10-004
Prompted by:
Date Opened: 12/15/2010
Investigator: Chris Lash **Reviewer:** Jeff Quandt
Approver: Richard Boyd
Subject: Electric Power Steering Failure

MANUFACTURER & PRODUCT INFORMATION

Manufacturer: GENERAL MOTORS CORP.
Products: 2004-2007 Saturn Ion
Population: 384,000 (Estimated)

Problem Description: Faults in the electric power steering (EPS) system may cause the system to suddenly shutdown, resulting in an increase in steering effort and and EPS warning light.

FAILURE REPORT SUMMARY

| | ODI | Manufacturer | Total |
|----------------------------|-----|--------------|--------|
| Complaints: | 633 | 638 | 1234** |
| Crashes/Fires: | 4 | 7 | 11 |
| Injury Incidents: | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Number of Injuries: | 1 | 3 | 4 |
| Fatality Incidents: | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Other*: | 0 | 1,444 | 1,444 |

*Description of Other: Warranty claims

** Count indicates duplicate reports received by ODI and manufacturer.

ACTION / SUMMARY INFORMATION

Action: A Recall Query has been opened.

Summary:

ODI has received 633 complaints alleging sudden loss of power assist to the steering in model year (MY) 2004-2007 Saturn Ion vehicles manufactured and sold by General Motors Corporation (GM). Four complaints alleged that the increased steering efforts contributed to a crash, with one reporting an injury. More than one third of the subject vehicle complaints have been received in the past six months.

In January, 2010, ODI opened Preliminary Evaluation PE10-005 to investigate the sudden loss of power steering assist in MY 2005 through 2010 Chevrolet Cobalt vehicles. In April 2010, in response to an ODI information request letter for PE10-005, GM provided ODI with complaint and warranty information related to EPS loss of assist for Saturn Ion vehicles for the same MY's. At that time, GM had identified 638 complaints and 1,444 warranty claims for loss of EPS assist repairs for MY 2005 through 2007 Saturn Ion vehicles. The complaints included 7 crash claims with information indicating an EPS fault occurred, including 2 incidents involving a total of 3 injury allegations. In March 2010, GM recalled approximately 1.05 million Chevrolet Cobalt and Pontiac G5 vehicles to correct a defect in the EPS system. The recalled vehicles were manufactured with a substantially similar EPS system as the subject vehicles. In the defect notification letter for 10V-073, GM stated that the recalled vehicles may experience a sudden loss of assist that could occur at any time while driving and that if power steering was lost the vehicle would revert to manual steering mode but would require increased steering effort from the driver.

A Recall Query has been opened to assess the frequency, scope and safety consequences of sudden loss of steering assist in the subject vehicles.