



U.S. Department
of Transportation

**National Highway
Traffic Safety
Administration**

ODI RESUME

Investigation: EA 13-008
Prompted by:
Date Opened: 12/20/2013
Investigator: Evan Frings **Reviewer:** Scott Yon
Approver: Frank Borris
Subject: Loss of rear lighting assembly

MANUFACTURER & PRODUCT INFORMATION

Manufacturer: Mercedes-Benz USA, LLC.
Products: 2008-2011 Mercedes Benz C-Class
Population: 252,867
Problem Description: Consumers allege a loss of one or more rear lighting assemblies due to an overheated electrical connector that, in some cases, resulted in melting, smoke, or possibly a fire.

FAILURE REPORT SUMMARY

	ODI	Manufacturer	Total
Complaints:	114	291	402**
Crashes/Fires:	3	2	5
Injury Incidents:	1	0	1
Number of Injuries:	1	0	1
Fatality Incidents:	0	0	0
Other*:	0	23,534	23,534

*Description of Other: Warranty claims reported by Mercedes Benz (as of September 2013) which may relate to the alleged defect.

** Total eliminates duplicates received by ODI and manufacturer.

ACTION / SUMMARY INFORMATION

Action: Open an Engineering Analysis.

Summary:

ODI initially received 21 reports of rear light assembly failure due to a melted electrical connector or housing. Since opening the initial investigation ODI has received a total of 114 complaints reflecting an ongoing and increasing trend. In each report, one or both rear light assemblies fail completely (i.e., all lights housed within the assembly extinguish, including the stop, tail, and turn signal functions) when the electrical ground connection is compromised as a result of high resistance and subsequent thermal over-heating. According to Mercedes-Benz, the over-heating of the ground wire is caused by corrosion between the connectors in the ground circuit to the tail light. ODI is aware of a total of 5 reports alleging fire including one injury allegation as a result of this issue. Analysis of subject vehicle complaint data indicates an increased likelihood of failure as the vehicles age.

The Preliminary Evaluation (PE13-026) has been upgraded to an Engineering Analysis to further assess the risks and frequency resulting from failure of rear lighting assemblies in the subject vehicles.

The ODI reports cited above can be reviewed at <http://www-odi.nhtsa.dot.gov/owners/SearchNHTSAID> under the following identification (ODI) numbers:

10466181, 10475771, 10479913, 10489338, 10498161, 10499828, 10502606, 10505806, 10508108, 10509272, 10509639, 10511017, 10511033, 10513304, 10513735, 10514998, 10519533, 10519714, 10520672, 10523816, 10524819, 10524849, 10524856, 10524886, 10524967, 10524991, 10524992, 10525010, 10525026, 10525060, 10525099, 10525105, 10525174, 10525200, 10525264, 10525299, 10525312, 10525335, 10525367, 10525416, 10525429, 10525528, 10525551, 10525692, 10525818, 10531638, 10531718, 10531751, 10531757, 10531821, 10531930, 10532083, 10532317, 10532677, 10533409, 10533697, 10533792, 10533895, 10534352, 10534430, 10534513, 10535018, 10535128, 10535240, 10535414, 10535874, 10535880, 10535999, 10536346, 10536684, 10537224, 10537717, 10537746, 10537999, 10538329, 10538533, 10541792, 10542284, 10542549, 10542566, 10542994, 10544138, 10544663, 10544839, 10545332, 10546745, 10547177, 10547369, 10547471, 10548145, 10548646, 10548994, 10549003, 10549908, 10550608, 10550717, 10551423, 10551735, 10551868, 10551897, 10552144, 10552501, 10552645, 10552989, 10553096, 10553796, 10553842, 10554996, 10555888, 10556003, 10556136, 10556248.