U.S. Department of Transportation

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

ODI RESUME

OFFICE OF DEFECTS INVESTIGATION

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Investigation: EQ 17-001
Prompted by: 17E-031
Date Opened: 07/06/2017 **Date Closed:** 02/08/2018
Investigator: Alexander Ansley
Approver: Jennifer Timian
Subject: Fuel Filter Flange May Crack

MANUFACTURER & PRODUCT INFORMATION

Manufacturer: Continental Automotive Systems, Inc.
Products: Continental Fuel Filter Flange
Population: 456,106

Problem Description: The fuel pump flange on the affected vehicles may crack, allowing fuel to leak.

ACTION / SUMMARY INFORMATION

Action: Close EQ

Summary:

Over the span of a number of months in later 2016 and mid-2017, automakers Volkswagen, Audi and Porsche filed four safety recall notifications and information reports (16V-660, 17V-151, 17-V289 and 17V-298) concerning fuel leaks in certain VW, Audi, and Porsche vehicle products. According to these manufacturers, the vehicles were equipped with fuel pump flanges that could over time develop small cracks or fissures allowing fuel to leak in vaporous or liquid state. The leaks could, in the presence of an ignition source, have the potential to cause a vehicle fire.

In June 2017, at the request of the Recall Management Division (RMD), the supplier of the fuel flanges, Continental Automotive Systems, Inc. (Continental), filed its safety recall notification and information report (17E-031). Continental limited its defect decision to the fuel flanges supplied to VW, Audi and Porsche products under the existing recalls, but as required by regulation identified other automaker purchasers that used potentially similar fuel flanges manufactured from the same material, an industry standard material known as Polyoxymethylen-Copolymer (POM). Continental acknowledged that a root cause for the leaks have not been determined, but it believed environmental factors such as acids from cleaning solutions or other sources, were a factor, an observation also identified by VW, Audi and Porsche. Continental also identified that there were specific differences in design and application between vehicle manufacturers, and the installed location of the fuel flange were considered other pertinent factors.

RMD opened this Equipment Query (EQ) investigation in order to obtain additional information to identify whether other automaker products might be at risk of fuel leakage and, if so to pursue additional safety recalls where needed. Accordingly, an information request (IR) was issued to Continental in September 2017, for it to provide additional data and information to explain the distinctions between the recalled fuel flanges and the not recalled population.

On September 26, 2017, Continental submitted a partial response to the IR. It then provided updates on October 9, 2017, and October 18, 2017, to complete its response.

In the meantime, Continental continued its review of the scoping of its defect decision and report. Continental's additional evaluation eventually resulted in an amended recall report in which the company stated it had confirmed the scoping identified by VW, Audi and Porsche was correct given the lack of field incidents with any non-recalled fuel flanges, and due to the differences in design and application between the recalled products and the non-recalled ones. This amendment was submitted in December 2017.

RMD, with the support of several of the Office of Defects Investigation (ODI) investigating offices, reviewed Continental's IR responses and the data and testing results appended to them. The information at this juncture indicates Continental's scoping of its recall decision is appropriate and expenditure of further resources to pursue additional safety recalls from other automakers is not warranted. Accordingly, this equipment query investigation is closed.