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OFFICE
DEFECTS INVESTIGATION

DaimlerChrysler Corporation

Susan M. Cischke

Vice President

Vehicle Certification, Compliance &
Safety Affairs

May 6, 1999

Mr. Kenneth N. Weinstein
Associate Administrator, Safety Assurance
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
400 Seventh Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590

99V-115 (01)

Dear Mr. Weinstein:

In accordance with the provisions of the National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act of 1966 and 49 CFR Part 573, Defect and Noncompliance Reports, DaimlerChrysler Corporation herewith furnishes the Defect Information Report which contains details of a recall regarding a potential safety related deficiency in some 1994 through 1999 model year Dodge trucks. The hydraulic clutch line may rupture from overheating at maximum rated vehicle operating modes.

This issue is the subject of NHTSA investigation EA98-005.

DaimlerChrysler Corporation will formalize the recall requirements and instructions to dealers in the future. Copies will be provided to the NHTSA when available, and Vehicle Identification Number range and assembly plant information for the involved vehicles will also be furnished at that time.

Sincerely,



Susan M. Cischke

Enclosures: Defect Information Report for DaimlerChrysler Recall # 828

cc: K.C. DeMeter, NHTSA

Division of Occupational Safety & Health
California Department of Industrial Relations

DEFECT INFORMATION REPORT FOR DaimlerChrysler RECALL # 828**May 6, 1999****Page 1****Submission date: May 6, 1999**

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Identifying classification of vehicles potentially affected:

<u>Make</u>	<u>Model</u>	<u>Model Year</u>	<u>Inclusive Dates of Manufacture</u>	<u>Volume</u>	<u>Other</u>
Dodge	Ram Pickup	1994 through 1999	late July 93 through late April 1999	8,800 (est)	equipped with manual transmission, V10 engine and four wheel drive transfer case

Estimated percentage containing defect: unknown**Description of defect:**

Under sustained maximum rated vehicle load, while driving up a steep grade in four wheel drive low range in hot ambient conditions, the local exhaust temperature proximate to the hydraulic clutch line may generate line temperatures that exceed the temperature limit of the clutch line material. If this operating condition occurs and the clutch is depressed the line may rupture. If the line ruptures, the fluid may ignite on the hot exhaust potentially causing a vehicle fire.

Chronological summary of events which were the basis for determining existence of defect:

The following events occurred in the period from late October 1997 through late April 1999:

- The NHTSA opened PE97-043.
- Original data collection identified that random mis-routing of the clutch line could occur at the manufacturing plant or due to vehicle service. If the plastic line was mis-routed against the exhaust pipe it could melt and leak. No other trends were evident.
- All manufacturing plants incorporated process improvements to ensure that the clutch line was properly routed in the design location, away from the exhaust pipe.
- DaimlerChrysler inspected some complaint vehicles and identified a unique operating

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condition on one vehicle.

- Vehicle testing was conducted that identified a condition near the maximum limit of vehicle loading and operation coupled with high ambient heat conditions that could lead to clutch line rupture due to heat damage on manual transmission equipped vehicles built with the V10 engine, and four wheel drive.
- Additional testing under similar conditions of other engine combinations identified that vehicles could operate to their maximum capacity without damage to the clutch line.
- DaimlerChrysler is aware of 3 customer complaints of vehicle fires that appear associated with this issue, 5 customer complaints of leaking clutch lines and 8 other warranty returns of parts that show evidence of thermal damage, related to the subject vehicles.
- This vehicle configuration has been removed from production until a redesigned hydraulic clutch line system that is not susceptible to these operating conditions can be implemented.
- This issue was presented to the Vehicle Regulations Committee and a safety recall was approved.

Statement of measures to be taken to correct defect:

A remedy for this issue has not yet been established. Alternatives have been proposed and testing of proposals continues. DaimlerChrysler's scheduling information for implementing this recall is not available at this time.