

DAIMLERCHRYSLER

DaimlerChrysler Corporation
Matthew C. Reynolds
Director
Vehicle Compliance & Safety Affairs

September 8, 2000

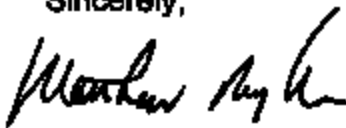
Mr. Kenneth N. Weinstein
Associate Administrator, Safety Assurance
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
400 Seventh Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Mr. Weinstein:

Attached is DaimlerChrysler Corporation's Defect Information Report regarding some 1996 through 2000 model year minivan vehicles. The affected vehicles were built with fuel rails that have nitrile o-rings at the cross over tube seal. The sealing capability of nitrile o-rings may degrade with extended usage and exposure to elevated temperatures. Although DaimlerChrysler does not believe that the available data suggests any current risk to motor vehicle safety, DaimlerChrysler has decided to conduct a field action in the form of a safety recall to avoid the potential for a high mileage durability concern.

DaimlerChrysler will formalize the recall requirements and instructions to dealers in the near 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,



Matthew C Reynolds

Enclosure: Defect Information Report for DaimlerChrysler Recall # 895

cc: K.C. DeMeter, NHTSA
Division of Occupational Safety & Health
California Department of Industrial Relations

DEFECT INFORMATION REPORT FOR DAIMLERCHRYSLER RECALL # 895

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Submission date: September 8, 2000

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	Caravan	1996	mid Feb, 1995	1,163,000	Equipped with
Dodge	Grand Caravan	through	through	(est.)	3.3L or 3.8L
Plymouth	Voyager	2000	early Sept, 1999		gasoline
Plymouth	Grand Voyager				engines
Chrysler	Town & Country				

Estimated percentage containing defect: unknown

Description of defect:

Nitrile o-ring seals in the fuel rail may degrade over time and extended exposure to elevated temperatures. Fuel leakage from the underhood fuel injection fuel rail delivery system could result. Fuel leakage in the presence of an ignition source could result in a vehicle fire.

The following chronology of principal events led to the determination of a defect:

- DaimlerChrysler began to evaluate the durability of nitrile o-rings contained in some minivan applications (3.3L and 3.8L gasoline engines) after discovering long term durability issues with nitrile o-rings used similarly in other 3.3L vehicles.
- As part of its investigation, DaimlerChrysler undertook an extensive engineering analysis and a comprehensive review of field experience.
 - The engineering analysis undertook to evaluate the impact of differences in the applications of the nitrile o-rings, including differences in the underhood temperature maximums, differences in the rate of temperature change and differences in the amount of stretch applied to the o-rings in each application. Each of these factors was considered a significant contributor to the o-ring degradation experienced in prior investigations involving nitrile o-rings.
 - The results of the engineering analysis suggested that the o-rings as used in the minivan application will have a substantially longer useful life. However, the study also suggested that prolonged exposure to operating temperatures near the maximum recommended limit for the o-rings as used in the minivan application could reduce their sealing capabilities after extended use.

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- DaimlerChrysler's comprehensive review of field experience suggested no trend of o-ring degradation in the minivan application. The rate of fuel leak complaints related to this issue is currently 4 in 100,000 vehicles. In addition, of the 1.2 million vehicle population, DaimlerChrysler has identified a total of 19 instances in which fires appear to have originated the engine compartment. The company has been unable to determine the exact cause of these fires; however, some could be related to a fuel leak.
- This issue was presented to the Vehicle Regulations Committee, which decided to conduct a safety recall as a preventive measure. This decision was made to prevent the potential for o-rings to leak in the future and long before we anticipate the fuel rails to leak. We do not anticipate that any problem in the field will arise prior to the availability of a repair.

Statement of measures to be taken to correct defect:

The affected vehicle fuel rails will be equipped with a seal to prevent external leakage of fuel from the fuel rail crossover tube, should the existing o-rings continue to degrade. DaimlerChrysler is establishing the time line for implementing this action and will provide details as soon as they are available.