

# DAIMLERCHRYSLER

August 1, 2001

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

RECEIVED  
01 AUG -01 PM 2:30  
DaimlerChrysler Corporation  
Matthew C. Reynolds  
Director  
Vehicle Compliance & Safety Affairs

01V-253 ①

Dear Mr. Weinstein:

Attached is DaimlerChrysler Corporation's Defect Information Report, complying with the requirements of the National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act of 1966 and 49 CFR Part 573, Defect and Noncompliance Reports, regarding some 2000 and 2001 model year DaimlerChrysler full size vans. The affected vehicles were built with an unused power seat circuit, which may, under specific conditions, develop a high resistive short possibly resulting in a vehicle fire.

DaimlerChrysler will notify NHTSA in August regarding implementation plans for this action.

Sincerely,



*for*  
Matthew C Reynolds

Enclosures: Defect Information Report for DaimlerChrysler Recall # 990

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

# DEFECT INFORMATION REPORT FOR DAIMLERCHRYSLER RECALL # 990

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Submission date: August 1, 2001

01V-253 ②

## Identifying classification of vehicles potentially affected:

<u>Make</u>	<u>Model</u>	<u>Model Year</u>	<u>Inclusive Dates of Manufacture</u>	<u>US Market Volume</u>	<u>Other</u>
Dodge	Ram Van/Wagon	2000/ 2001	08-1999 through 03-05-2001	98,000(Est.)	Non- Power Seat Equipped

Estimated percentage containing defect: Unknown

## Description of defect:

In the presence of road salt, water, and possibly other debris, the power seat connector located beneath driver's seat may develop a high resistive short circuit that cycles the circuit breaker. If the circuit breaker cycles for an extended period of time, a sufficient amount of heat may build up in the connector, potentially resulting in a vehicle fire.

The following chronology of principal events occurred between late February 2001 and late July 2001 and led to the determination of a defect:

- A vehicle fire investigation, initiated from the receipt of a single Canadian field report, suggested that an unused connector located under the driver's seat may have been the source of the fire.
- A search for similar fires in the United States showed no incidences.
- An investigation was initiated to evaluate the hypothesis of the unused connector as a possible fire source.
- It was established that in vehicles not equipped with a power driver's seat, the connector remained unattached and on the floor under the driver's seat.
- The wiring harness always included the power seat connector as standard equipment, and, beginning with the 2000 model year the power seat connector circuit became continuously powered when the circuit breaker was added as standard equipment.
- As a preventive action during the course of the investigation, the assembly process was changed to add non-conductive grease to the connector.
- It was established that approximately 50% of all vans are sent to vehicle modifiers to be re-fitted and sold as conversion vans.
- Research conducted to establish the option levels of manual and power driver's seats installed by the vehicle modifiers was inconclusive.

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- Interviews with modifiers did conclude that if a power driver's seat were installed, the factory provided connector was utilized as a power source.
- A search of potentially related incidences on modified vehicles provided no reports.
- Additional searches and analysis established that there were a total of 10 field reports worldwide that appear to have been caused by this issue. All ten reports were from vehicles not equipped with a power driver's seat.
- On vehicles equipped with factory installed power seats, the connector is attached to the seat riser and is such, not in contact with road salt, water and other debris. There have been no reported issues with factory installed power seat equipped vehicles.
- Analysis of build records established that all 10 alleged incidences were on vehicles equipped with rubber floor mats.
- The investigation established that water, road salt, and other debris can be tracked into the vehicle interior and can collect in the connector. This may result in a high resistive short circuit that cycles the circuit breaker. If the circuit breaker cycles for an extended period of time, a sufficient amount of heat may build up in the connector, potentially resulting in a vehicle fire.
- It appeared that the rubber flooring provided less resistance than carpet to the introduction of water, road salt, and other debris, thus explaining the homogenous nature of the subject incidences. Analysis and comparison to historical experience established that the introduction of such substances can occur in carpeted vehicles as well, only on a latent and less frequent basis.
- At the start of the 2002 model year, the circuit breaker was removed for all non-power seat equipped vehicles.
- There have been no reported incidences of accidents or injuries related to this condition.
- This data was presented to the Vehicle Regulations Committee who decided to conduct a safety recall.

**Statement of measures to be taken to correct defect:**

The circuit breaker will be removed from the fuse panel on the affected vehicles. DaimlerChrysler will provide owners with the option of either completing this action themselves or by an authorized dealer. DaimlerChrysler is currently planning to notify dealers and owners during August 2001.

DaimlerChrysler Corporation has a longstanding policy and practice of reimbursing owners who have incurred the cost of repairing a problem that subsequently becomes the subject of a field action. Due to the warranty coverage on the affected vehicles, it is anticipated that no customer would have incurred any expense for this repair. To ensure consistency, DaimlerChrysler, as part of the owner letter, will request that customers send original receipt and/or other adequate proof of payment to the company for confirmation of the expense.