

DAIMLERCHRYSLER

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OFFICE OF
DEFECTS INVESTIGATION

February 7, 2002

DaimlerChrysler Corporation

Matthew C. Reynolds

Director

Vehicle Compliance & Safety Affairs

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

02V-042 ① of ③

Dear Mr. Weinstein:

Attached is DaimlerChrysler Corporation's Defect Information Report, complying with the requirements of 49 CFR Part 573, Defect and Noncompliance Reports, which contains details of a recall regarding some 2001 model year Dodge Ram pickup vehicles. The alternator wire on a small percentage of these vehicles may be improperly attached, leaving it susceptible to a possible loss of clamp load under certain circumstances. If the alternator connection becomes loose, the high resistance circuit may overheat the power distribution center (PDC), possibly causing a vehicle fire. DaimlerChrysler Corporation will conduct a safety recall to inspect the wire attachment to the PDC and re-position and re-tighten the attaching nut if necessary.

Sincerely,



Matthew C Reynolds

Enclosures: Defect Information Report for DaimlerChrysler Corporation Recall # B04

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

DEFECT INFORMATION REPORT FOR DAIMLERCHRYSLER RECALL # B04

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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>US Market Volume</u>
Dodge	Ram Pickup	2001	01/01/2000 through 08/28/2000	268,740 (Est.)

Estimated percentage containing defect: Unknown

Description of defect:

The alternator wire connection to the power distribution center may loosen, which could cause a vehicle fire.

Chronology of principal events that led to the determination of a defect:

The following chronology of principal events occurred between late September 2001 and late January 2002 and led to the determination of a defect:

- NHTSA opened inquiry PE01-034 based on 2 complaints of vehicle fires possibly related to the power distribution center (PDC).
- Data from all sources for 2001 MY Dodge Ram Pickup vehicles shows 23 incidences indicating thermal issues possibly relating to an improperly fastened electrical connection from the alternator to the PDC. These incidences include 8 reported vehicle fires.
- A loss of clamp load at the alternator connection to the PDC can cause a high resistance circuit, potentially resulting in melting of the PDC and surrounding components.
- Data analysis shows that 19 of the 23 incidences occurred from January of 2000 through the end of August 2000.
- The wire connecting the alternator to the PDC is designed to be oriented with the crimp facing upward.
- The investigation established that if the wire were assembled with the crimp downward and not held in place while the joint was being tightened, that it could ride up on the side of the PDC channel wall.
- Laboratory testing showed that if the crimp was oriented in a downward direction and assembled so that it had ridden up the PDC channel wall, that it would not lose clamp load. The testing also showed that if an alternator wire were assembled to the PDC with the crimp on the channel wall, and subjected to a lateral force, such as that possibly encountered in service, that the crimp could migrate off the wall and into the channel, resulting in a degradation of the clamp load.

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- It was established that a process clarification was made midway through the 2001 model year that more explicitly showed that the attachment of the alternator wire to the PDC have the crimp positioned in the upward direction. This clarification was intended to remove any ambiguous assembly operation. The process clarification also eliminated the possibility of the crimp riding up on top of the channel wall.
- A survey conducted in the field indicated that one vehicle built before the process clarification had insufficient torque on the alternator connection to the PDC module. Survey data taken from vehicles after the process clarification showed no degradation in clamp load of the alternator connection.
- There are no reported accidents or injuries attributed to this condition.
- This data was presented to the Vehicle Regulations Committee who decided to conduct a safety recall to correct the condition.

Statement of measures to be taken to correct defect:

DaimlerChrysler Corporation will inspect the installation of the alternator wire connection to the PDC and if necessary re-position the wire so that the crimp connection will face upward and tighten the fastener to the prescribed torque setting. DaimlerChrysler will formalize the 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.

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 Corporation, 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.