

DAIMLERCHRYSLER
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DIVISION OF
DEFECTS INVESTIGATION

DaimlerChrysler Corporation

Matthew C. Reynolds

Director

Vehicle Compliance & Safety Affairs

March 7, 2002

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

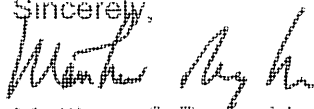
02V-076 ① of ③

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 1997-1999 model year minivans. Inconsistent bonding of the D-pillar mastic sound barrier patch may allow the patch to fall off and become entangled in the rear outboard seat belt assembly, rendering it unusable. DaimlerChrysler Corporation will conduct a safety recall to replace the mastic patches with foam blockers and inspect and replace all 3rd row seat belt assemblies as necessary on the affected vehicles.

This issue is the subject of NHTSA investigation PE02-004. Per an agreement between our respective staffs, this Defect Information Report will serve as sufficiently responsive to the information requested in PE02-004, and a response will not be filed with the Agency.

Sincerely,



Matthew C Reynolds

Enclosures: Defect Information Report for DaimlerChrysler Corporation Recall # B09

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

DEFECT INFORMATION REPORT FOR DAIMLERCHRYSLER RECALL # B09

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Submission date: March 7, 2002

02V-076 ② or ③

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>
Chrysler	Town & Country	1997-	06/1996 through	545,311 (Est.)	Short
Dodge	Caravan	1999	10/31/1998		Wheel
Plymouth	Voyager				Base Only

Estimated percentage containing defect: Unknown

Description of defect:

The D-pillar mastic sound barrier patch may loosen and drop into the rear outboard seat belt assembly, causing the seat belt to become inoperative.

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

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

- NHTSA opened investigation PE02-004 based on 7 complaints of 3rd row seat belt retractors binding due to contamination from body seam sealer in 1997 and 1998 MY Dodge Caravan and Plymouth Voyager vehicles. A review of internal complaint data revealed an additional 111 reports of the condition on 1997,98 and early 99 MY vehicles (57 CAIRS, 54 Field Reports). A total of only 12 complaints were identified on 1996 MY vehicles, with the latest one being received early in the 2000 CY.
- There have been 3130 warranty claims for replacement of 3rd row outboard seat belt assemblies in 1997 MY short wheel base minivans and 3756 claims for 1998 MY vehicles.
- The investigation established that the contamination was being caused by the D-pillar mastic sound barrier patch (located vertically above the 3rd row seat belt turning loop) separating from the body and becoming entangled in the seat belt webbing behind the trim panel. This patch was installed on the trim line.
- This condition can make the seat belt difficult to withdraw and retract, or render it totally inoperable.
- It was determined that the long wheel base Dodge Grand Caravan, Plymouth Grand Voyager and Chrysler Town and Country minivans were not affected by the condition since the D-pillar mastic patch is mounted rearward of the seatbelt turning loop.
- The investigation established that the mastic patches were replaced in October of 1998

DEFECT INFORMATION REPORT FOR DAIMLERCHRYSLER RECALL # B09

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(1999 model year) with foam blockers. DaimlerChrysler Corporation has received no complaints for this condition since the implementation of the foam blockers.

- Analysis showed that the condition appeared at an earlier age in warm climates and on darker exterior colors, but it occurred at a nearly equivalent frequency eventually in all geographic regions and on all exterior color combinations.
- Design data showed that precise placement of the part was required during installation due to the size of the hole being covered and the convex mounting surface. Plant audit records also show that adhesion of the patch varied with humidity and temperature.
- The complaint data showed no pattern relative to vehicle build date, suggesting that random variation in the application and/or the manufacture of the mastic patch as well as the ambient conditions during installation may have contributed to a higher probability of it eventually becoming separated from the body.
- There have been no accidents or injuries associated with this issue.
- 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 replace the mastic patches with foam blockers and inspect and replace all 3rd row seat belt assemblies as necessary on the affected vehicles. DaimlerChrysler expects to implement parts distribution and national notification to both dealers and owners when a sufficient quantity of parts becomes available. DaimlerChrysler's scheduling information for implementing this recall is not available at this time.

DaimlerChrysler Corporation has a long standing policy and practice of reimbursing owners who have incurred the cost of repairing a problem that subsequently becomes the subject of a field action. 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.