



U.S. Department
of Transportation

**National Highway
Traffic Safety
Administration**

400 Seventh St., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590

DEC 21 2004

Mr. Stephen J. Speth
Vehicle Compliance and Safety Affairs
DaimlerChrysler Corporation
800 Chrysler Drive – CIMS 482-00-91
Auburn Hills, MI 48326-2757

Re: Recall No. 04V-596

Dear Mr. Speth:

We have reviewed DaimlerChrysler's letter dated December 15, 2004, informing the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) that it is conducting a safety recall on 2000 – 2003 model year Dodge Durango and Dakota four wheel drive vehicles to replace upper ball joints.

Although you indicated that DaimlerChrysler has not identified a safety related defect and would not be conducting the recall in accordance with the Safety Act, you stated that DaimlerChrysler would "proceed with this campaign to address its customers' concerns."

The Office of Defects Investigation (ODI) has reviewed your notification letter to owners and, subject to the changes that we discussed, has determined that such notification is in the best interests of the vehicle owners. Although the company has not made a defect determination, ODI believes the premature failure of the upper ball joints in these vehicles, which may cause the front wheel to separate from the vehicle and result in a loss of control and possible crash, is a safety defect. Accordingly, we have assigned NHTSA identification number 04V-596 to this safety recall.

Sincerely,

Kathleen C. DeMeter, Director
Office of Defects Investigation
Enforcement