

**DAIMLERCHRYSLER**

MS-215

2004 JAN 12 P 4: 58

OFFICE OF  
DEFECTS INVESTIGATION

January 7, 2004

DaimlerChrysler Corporation

Stephan J. Speth

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

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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 potential safety related defect in some 1993-1999 model year Chrysler Concorde, Chrysler LHS, and Dodge Intrepid vehicles; 1993-1997 model year Eagle Vision vehicles; 1999 model year Chrysler 300M vehicles; 1995-1999 Chrysler Cirrus and Dodge Stratus vehicles; and 1998-1999 model year Chrysler Sebring Convertible and Plymouth Breeze vehicles equipped with automatic transmissions and floor shifters. The floor shifter ignition-park interlock on the above vehicles may become defeated and allow the shifter to be moved out of the Park position with the key removed. An inoperative interlock may also allow the key to be removed when the shifter has not been placed in the Park position. This may result in the vehicle rolling away without warning.

DaimlerChrysler Corporation will conduct a voluntary safety recall to install a new load-limiting push rod into the floor shifter lever of the affected vehicles.

Sincerely,



Stephan J. Speth

Enclosures: Defect Information Report for DaimlerChrysler Corporation Recall # C45

cc: K. C. DeMater, NHTSA

**DEFECT INFORMATION REPORT FOR DAIMLERCHRYSLER RECALL #C45**

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Submission date: January 7, 2004

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**Identifying classification of vehicles potentially affected:**

Make	Model	Model Year	Inclusive Dates of Manufacture	Vehicle Volume
Chrysler	LHS	1993-1999	4/1/1992- 7/31/1999	2,315,768
	Concorde	1993-1999		
	Cirus	1995-1999		
	Sebring Convertible	1996-1999		
	300M	1999		
Dodge	Intrepid	1993-1999		
	Stratus	1995-1999		
Eagle	Vision	1993-1997		
Plymouth	Breeze	1996-1999		

**Estimated percentage containing defect: 10%****Description of defect:**

The floor shifter ignition-park interlock may become defeated and allow the shifter to be moved out of the Park position with the key removed. An inoperative interlock may also allow the key to be removed when the shifter has not been placed in the Park position.

**The following chronology of principal events occurred between March, 2003, and December, 2003, and led to the determination of a defect:**

- In late March of 2003, a vehicle roll-away incident involving a 1999 MY Plymouth Breeze fleet vehicle was reported to DaimlerChrysler Corporation. It was reported that the operator had left the vehicle's floor shifter in Drive, removed the key and exited the vehicle. Review of the vehicle established that the Ignition-park Interlock system was non-functional.
- In April of 2003 NHTSA opened Recall Query RQ03-005 based on six complaints identifying twelve 1999 MY Chrysler Cirrus, Chrysler Sebring Convertible, Plymouth Breeze, and Dodge Stratus (henceforth identified as JA/JX) vehicles with alleged non-functional ignition-park interlock systems. In 1998 DaimlerChrysler initiated Recall #789 to address non-functional ignition-park interlock systems in 1995-1998 MY JA/JX vehicles.

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- Review of the floor shifter from the 1999 MY Plymouth Breeze fleet vehicle revealed that the part may have been subjected to an abnormally high loading while the Interlock system was locked. The rear surface of the shifter plunger that interfaces with the park gate was significantly distorted and the interlock pin was bent and no longer engaged in the interlock lever track.
- A review of the design history and usage established that significant changes were made to the floor shifter to reduce the mechanical advantage of the shifter button for the 2000 MY, at the same time brake transmission shifter interlock (BTSI) was incorporated. This also revealed that similar floor shifters were used on the 1993-1999 Chrysler Concorde, Chrysler 300M, Chrysler LHS, Dodge Intrepid, and Eagle Vision (henceforth identified as LH) vehicles.
- In late June, the company initiated an extended field survey and a statistical methods analysis to understand the scope of the issue and factors contributing to the shifter override condition.
- In July, NHTSA upgraded the Recall Query RQ03-005 to Engineering Analysis EA03-011.
- Testing and analysis established that excessive plunger travel is the primary characteristic that correlates to a reduction in force needed to override the shifter. This testing has demonstrated that reducing the mechanical advantage of the shifter button in the 2000 MY and beyond vehicles limits the ability to induce excessive plunger travel, thus significantly increasing the load required to defeat the ignition-park interlock system.
- The extended field survey concluded in late November. Of 387 1993-1999 LH, 1995-1999 JA, and 1996-1999 JX vehicles surveyed, 39 were identified as having non-functional ignition-park interlock systems.
- DaimlerChrysler is aware of 612 vehicles with known complaints and field reports associated with this concern in the 1998 and 1999 MY LH/JA/JX vehicles in the U.S. Of these reports, 127 allege property damage due to a vehicle roll-away and 17 allege injuries.
- According to DaimlerChrysler legal records, there is one reported fatality, involving the second owner of a 1999 MY LH vehicle. The original owner of the subject vehicle was a rental agency. DaimlerChrysler believes that the shifter assembly in this vehicle was abused as evidenced by the physical condition of the parts upon inspection subsequent to the alleged incident. Further, DaimlerChrysler believes that the abuse most likely occurred when the vehicle was in the possession of the rental fleet.
- FMVSS 114 does not specify a minimum required load to defeat the interlock system. DaimlerChrysler maintains that the original design met the intent of FMVSS 114. In all identified cases, the ignition-park interlock system was permanently damaged due to the application of excessive force to the shifter while the interlock system was locked.
- This data was presented to the Vehicle Regulations Committee who on December 19, 2003 decided to conduct a safety recall to repair the affected vehicles.

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

DaimlerChrysler Corporation will conduct a safety recall to inspect the function of the ignition-park interlock system in the affected vehicles. Vehicles which are identified with functional interlock systems will have a load-limiting push rod installed into the floor shifter lever. Vehicles with non-functional ignition-park interlock systems will have the shifter assembly replaced with a new shifter equipped with the load-limiting push rod. This load-limiting push rod limits the amount of force that can be exerted on the internal components of the shifter assembly, therefore significantly increasing the load required to defeat the ignition interlock.

DaimlerChrysler Corporation expects to initiate national notification to dealers and owners when a sufficient quantity of parts becomes available. DaimlerChrysler's scheduling information for implementing this safety recall is not available at this 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. 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.