



April 16, 2004

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OFFICE OF SAFETY INVESTIGATIONS

Mr. K. N. Weinstein
Associate Administrator for Safety Assurance
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
400 Seventh Street, S.W., Room 5321
Washington, D.C. 20590

04V-188
(3 pages)

Dear Mr. Weinstein:

The following information is submitted pursuant to the requirements of 49 CFR 573.6 as it applies to a determination by General Motors of a safety defect involving certain 2004 Chevrolet Malibu model vehicles.

573.6(c)(1): Chevrolet Division of General Motors Corporation

573.6(c)(2)(3)(4): This information is shown on the attached sheet.

573.6(c)(6): General Motors has decided that a defect, which relates to motor vehicle safety, exists in certain 2004 Chevrolet Malibu model vehicles. Analysis of a NCAP side impact test indicated the outboard anchorage of the driver's seat belt could disconnect because of contact between the seat trim and the anchorage connector when the seat was adjusted to its lowest position. If this occurred in a crash, the driver could receive greater injuries.

573.6(c)(8): On March 2, 2004, the General Motors Safety Center was notified of a test incident by the NHTSA. A NCAP side impact test (C40108) performed on a 2004 Malibu resulted in the terminal portion of the driver's side seat-belt lower anchorage detaching from the seat portion.

On March 11, 2004, GM and Autoliv North America Inc. representatives reviewed films and the 2004 Malibu at the test facility. After reviewing the test films and hardware, GM Engineering confirmed that the webbing terminal portion of the driver's seat belt lower outboard anchorage did not remain engaged to the seat portion of the anchorage.

Additional analysis and examination of the anchorage and the witness marks on the plastic trim on the side of the seat indicated that the anchorage was compressed between the carpet retainer/door trim and the plastic trim on the side of the seat. The compressive forces, combined with the motion resulting from the impact, created forceful compression and sliding contact between the protrusion on the anchorage and the trim on the side of the seat, resulting in the terminal portion of the anchorage disengaging from the seat portion of the anchorage.

The issue was presented to the FPE Director on April 1, 2004. The FPE Director requested preparation of a FPE report for review with Senior Management. The decision was made on April 8, 2004 to conduct a field action to insert a retainer between the latch spring and the latch spring guard on the anchorage on all involved vehicles.

Engineering investigation indicated that a necessary condition for the test incident was the lowest vertical adjustment of the driver's seat, which put the anchorage in a position relative to the seat trim that allowed the barrier impact to produce the contact forces and directions that released the anchorage. This relationship is not present with the driver's seat in higher adjustment positions or on the passenger seat, which has a fixed vertical position. While the facts learned from the investigation to date indicate there is not a safety-related defect with respect to the passenger seat belt anchorage, GM has decided to install the retainer on both the driver and passenger's belt anchorages. This avoids the risk of a second recall should new information, not now anticipated, be developed.

Product Investigations

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573.6(p)(8): This information will be included in the service procedure of the draft dealer bulletin.

Pursuant to 577.11(e), GM does not believe notification about reimbursement is required for this recall because no customers would have incurred expense in remedying this condition.

573.6(c)(9): Draft and final copies of the dealer bulletin and owner notification will be forwarded when available. General Motors plans to begin this safety recall in June 2004.

Sincerely,



Gay P. Kerr
Director
Product Investigations

2140 - 04027
Attachments

573.6(G)(2)(3)(4)

**VEHICLES POTENTIALLY AFFECTED BY MAKE, MODEL, AND MODEL YEAR
PLUS INCLUSIVE DATES OF MANUFACTURE**

<u>MAKE</u>	<u>MODEL SERIES</u>	<u>MODEL YEAR</u>	<u>NUMBER INVOLVED</u>	<u>INCLUSIVE MANUFACTURING DATES (FROM) (TO)</u>		<u>DESCRIPTIVE INFO. TO PROPERLY IDENT. VEH.</u>	<u>EST. NO. W/CONDITION</u>
Chevrolet	Z Car	2004	84,474	05/03	03/04	Malibu	100%