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DEFECTS INVESTIGATION
RECALL MGMT DIV.

07E-086
(11 pages)

Safety Defect and Noncompliance Report Guide for Vehicles
PART 573 Defect and Noncompliance Responsibility and Reports[1]

On June 7, 2007, Link Mfg [MFR] decided that (a defect which relates to motor vehicle safety) exists in the aftermarket parts listed below, and is furnishing notification to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration in accordance with 49 CFR Part 573 Defect and Noncompliance Responsibility and Reports.

Date this report was prepared: 9/12/07

Furnish the manufacturer's identification code for this recall (if applicable): 8M000070 LCR Bracket Campaign

1. Identify the full corporate name of the fabricating manufacturer of the vehicle being recalled. If the recalled vehicle is imported, provide the name and mailing address of the designated agent as prescribed by 49 U.S.C. §30164.

Link Manufacturing, Ltd., 223 15th St. NE, Sioux Center, IA 51250

Identify the corporate official, by name and title, whom the agency should contact with respect to this recall.

Benjamin Vande Griend – Customer Service Manager

Telephone Number: 712-722-4874 **Fax No.:** 712-722-4876

Name and Title of Person who prepared this report.

Benjamin Vande Griend
Customer Service Manager

Signed:

Benjamin Vande Griend

[1] Each manufacturer must furnish a report, to the Associate Administrator for Safety Assurance, for each defect or noncompliance condition which relates to motor vehicle safety.

This guide was developed from 49 CFR Part 573, "Defect and Noncompliance Responsibility and Reports" and also outlines information currently requested. Any questions, please consult the complete Part 573 or contact Mr. George Person at (202) 366-5210 or by FAX at (202) 366-7882.

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I. Identify the Vehicle Models Involved in the Recall

2. Identify the Vehicles Involved in the Recall, ***for each make and model or applicable vehicle line (provide illustrations or photographs as necessary to describe the vehicle), provide*****:**

Make(s): Link® UltraRide___ **Model Years Involved**: 2005-2007

Model(s):8M000070 (This is an aftermarket rear air suspension system for GM chassis Models 4500 and 5500)

Production Dates: **Beginning**: 6/10/2005___ **Ending**: 3/28/2007 : These are the production dates of the suspension.

VIN Range: **Beginning**: ____N/A_____ **Ending**: _____

Vehicle Type: ___GM_____ **Bodystyle**: Cab Chassis used for up fitters and body builders_____

Descriptive information which characterizes/distinguishes the recalled vehicles from those model vehicles not included in the recall:
The vehicles involved specifically have the 8M000072 axle kit for the 13.5K axle and have ambulance or shuttle bus bodies installed._____

_____

Make(s): _____ **Model Years Involved**: _____**Model(s)**: _____

Production Dates: **Beginning**: _____ **Ending**:

VIN Range: **Beginning**: _____ **Ending**: _____

Vehicle Type: _____ **Bodystyle**: _____

Descriptive information which characterizes/distinguishes the recalled vehicles from those model vehicles not included in the recall:

_____

_____

Make(s): _____ **Model Years Involved**: _____**Model(s)**: _____

Production Dates: **Beginning**: _____ **Ending**:

VIN Range: **Beginning**: _____ **Ending**: _____

Vehicle Type: _____ **Bodystyle**: _____

Descriptive information which characterizes/distinguishes the recalled vehicles from those model vehicles not included in the recall:

_____

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Identify the approximate percentage of the production of all the recalled models manufactured by your company between the inclusive dates of manufacture provided above, that the recalled model population represents. For example, if the recall involved Widgets equipped with certain items of equipment from January 1, 1996 through April 1, 1997, then what was the percentage of the recalled Widgets of all Widgets manufactured during that time period. – Of the 1,091 units sold, it is estimated that 367 (33.64%) are on the ambulance and bus applications.

II. Identify the Recall Population

3. Furnish the total number of vehicles recalled potentially containing the defect or noncompliance.

Model	Year	Number of Vehicles Potentially Involved
GM C4500/5500 4x2 13.5K axle	2005 – 2007	Approximately 367

Total Number Potentially Affected by the Recall: Approximately 367, of which 186 have already been corrected.

4. Furnish the approximate percentage of the total number of vehicles estimated to actually contain the defect or noncompliance: 33.64% We arrived at this percentage by contacting all of the ambulance and bus manufacturers who specify our suspensions. Based on the information they provided us, our estimate is that 367 of the 1,091 units sold were installed on ambulance and bus applications. Again, this is an estimate.

Identify and describe how the recall population was determined--in particular how the recalled models were selected and the basis for the beginning and final dates of manufacture of the recalled vehicles:

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2007 OCTOBER 15 9:00A
DEFECTS INVESTIGATION
RECALL MGMT DIV.

The population is specifically the cab chassis suspensions that contain the lateral control rod bracket in axle kit part number 8M000072, for the GM 4500/5500 4x2 13.5K axle which was manufactured from 6/10/2005 to 3/28/2007 and have ambulance or shuttle bus bodies installed. Determining the target population was difficult as this is an aftermarket product sold to upfitters/installers/dealers. In most cases, the suspension is installed on the chassis and then shipped to a dealer, and it is then sold to the end-user customer. We arrived at the approximate population based on information provided to us from the ambulance and bus manufacturers.

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III. Describe the Defect or Noncompliance

5. Describe the defect or noncompliance. The description should address the nature and physical location of the defect or noncompliance. Illustrations should be provided as appropriate.

The axle side lateral control rod bracket of the suspension has cracked in some cases.

See attached Safety Alert Letter and accompanying picture.

Describe the cause(s) of the defect or noncompliance condition.

The axle side lateral control bracket has failed in some instances due to the high loads sometimes encountered in the ambulance and bus applications.

Describe the consequence(s) of the defect or noncompliance condition.

If the lateral control rod bracket fractures, the handling of the vehicle will be adversely effected, including possible loss of vehicle control.

Identify any warning which can (a) precede or (b) occur.

a) The fatigue may be found with regular inspection for cracking before a fracture occurs.

b) Noticeable instability of the vehicle handling can be a warning sign.

If the defect or noncompliance is in a component or assembly purchased from a supplier, identify the supplier by corporate name and address.

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Identify the name and title of the chief executive officer or knowledgeable representative of the supplier:

_____

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IV. Provide the Chronology in Determining the Defect/Noncompliance

If the recall is for a defect, complete item 6, otherwise item 7.

6. With respect to a defect, furnish a chronological summary (including dates) of all the principle events that were the basis for the determination of the defect. The summary should include, but not be limited to, the number of reports, accidents, injuries, fatalities, and warranty claims. – No accidents, injuries, or fatalities have been reported.

7. With respect to a noncompliance, identify and provide the test results or other data (in chronological order and including dates) on which the noncompliance was determined.

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a) Prior to April 2006 – 8 cracked axle side lateral control rod brackets were returned to Link for inspection.

b) April 2006 – Axle side lateral rod control bracket was redesigned as the result of testing data.

c) November 2006 - Handling test conducted at test track to confirm handling of new design.

d) December 2006 - New bracket passes testing.

e) March 29, 2007 new axle side lateral control rod bracket field service kit added to axle kit as standard equipment.

f)March 30, 2007 new axle side lateral control rod bracket field service kit released.

g) May 21, 2007 – Service Bulletin was sent to all dealers involved to notify them of the situation.

h) June 7, 2007 – Service Bulletin labeled "Safety Alert" was mailed to all dealers notifying them that the axle side lateral control rod bracket on all ambulance and bus applications with the suspension involved must be replaced with the new axle side lateral control rod bracket.

i) As of Oct. 12, 2007, 186 units have been corrected.

V. Identify the Remedy

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RECALL MGMT DIV.

8. A description of the manufacturer's program for remedying the defect or noncompliance. This program shall include a plan for reimbursing an owner or purchaser who incurred costs to obtain a remedy for the problem addressed by the recall within a reasonable time in advance of the manufacturer's notification of owners, purchasers and dealers, in accordance with §573.13 of this part. A manufacturer's plan may incorporate by reference a general reimbursement plan it previously submitted to NHTSA, together with information specific to the individual recall. Information required by §573.13 that is not in a general reimbursement plan shall be submitted in the manufacturer's report to NHTSA under this section. If a manufacturer submits one or more general reimbursement plans, the manufacturer shall update each plan every two years, in accordance with §573.13. The manufacturer's remedy program and reimbursement plans will be available for inspection by the public at NHTSA headquarters.

Notification of this issue was sent as a Safety Alert letter on 6/7/2007. Customers are instructed to inspect the lateral control rod bracket. If cracking is found, they are to remove the vehicle from service immediately. Ambulance & bus applications must install the new bracket, kit number 800M1041. Link provides the kit at no cost and reimburses for the labor and inspection costs.

9. Furnish a description of the manufacturer's remedy for the defect or noncompliance. Clearly describe the differences between the recall condition and the remedy.

A new axle side lateral control rod bracket has been designed and replaced earlier bracket in production and has been provided via a service kit. Previous bracket was a "post" design".

The new bracket is a "bridge design "that extends over the differential clamping at two locations instead of one, thereby distributing loads more evenly.

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Clearly describe the distinguishing characteristics of the remedy component/assembly versus the recalled component/assembly.

The remedy component extends over the differential and spans the width of the chassis providing increased stability and support.

Identify and describe how and when the recall condition was corrected in production. If the production remedy was identical to the recall remedy in the field, so state. If the product was discontinued, so state.

The production remedy was the same as the field remedy. Axle kit number 8M000072 was replaced by axle kit number 8M000092 containing the new lateral control rod bracket on 3/29/2007.

VI. Identify the Recall Schedule

10. Furnish a schedule or agenda (with specific dates) for notification to other manufacturers, dealers/retailers, and purchasers. Please, identify any foreseeable problems with implementing the recall.

5/21/2007 – A service bulletin notifying dealers of the defect was mailed.

6/7/2007 – A service bulletin labeled "Safety Alert" was mailed to all dealers requiring them to identify and notify all customers, provide Link with a list of all customers and VIN numbers, and that the axle side lateral control rod bracket must be replaced and updated on all ambulance and bus applications with the suspension model 8M000070 and the 13.5K axle kit.

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2007 OCTOBER 15 9:00A
DEFECTS INVESTIGATION
RECALL MGMT DIV.

6/18 – 9/30/2007 – Safety Alert Letters were mailed from Link to end-user customers as requested by dealers. Dealers also mailed the Safety Alert Letter to customers themselves.

7/16 – 7/30/2007 – Follow up calls were made to all high volume dealers.

8/6 – 8/31/2007 – Follow up calls were made to all dealers.

9/14/2007 – A list from Monroe Truck Equipment of Flint, MI was received. This list contained all the dealers that they shipped the affected units to as well as the VIN numbers.

9/24 – 10/1/2007 – Safety Alert Letters containing the specific VIN numbers were mailed to all Monroe Truck Equipment dealers asking them to provide Link with the end-user customer's information.

9/17 – 10/3/2007 – All ambulance and bus manufacturers were called.

10/8 – 10/12/2007 – Safety Alert Letters were mailed to the end-user customers of Monroe Truck Equipment.

The primary challenge to implementing this campaign is that we sell our product as an aftermarket add on. Therefore, we require extensive cooperation from our dealers to help us identify all of the end-user customers involved. This can result in delays identifying and contacting the end-user customers.

VII. Furnish Recall Communications

11. Furnish a final copy of all notices, bulletins, and other communications that relate directly to the defect or noncompliance and which are sent to more than one manufacturer, distributor, or purchaser. This includes all communications (including both original and follow-up) concerning this recall from the time your company determines the defect or noncompliance condition on, not just the initial

notification. ***A DRAFT copy of the notification documents should be submitted to this office by Fax (202-366-7882) for review prior to mailing.***

Note that these documents are to be submitted separately from those provided in accordance with Part 579.5 requirements.