



**Nasser Zamani**  
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August 28, 2007

Dan Smith  
Associate Administrator for Vehicle Safety  
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration  
1200 New Jersey Avenue S.E.  
Washington, D.C. 20590

07V-400  
(3 Pages)

**Re: Defect Information Report FL-512, Steering Arm Installation**

Mr. Smith:

In accordance with Part 573 of Title 49 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Freightliner LLC herewith reports a safety campaign to recall approximately 450 Freightliner Columbia, Century ST, Coronado, and Classic XL manufactured November 2004 through August 2007 with a defect in the steering arm installation. The steering arms may have been installed on the wrong side.

Attached is Freightliner's Defect Information Report.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely yours,

  
Nasser Zamani

Cc: Michael Mason, CAL-OSHA  
Enclosure

Certified Mail# 700428900004/1202 102 y

## Defect Information Report

(Section 573.6)

August 28, 2007

**(c)(1) Manufacturer:** Freightliner LLC  
P.O. BOX 3849  
Portland, Oregon 97208  
(503) 745-5219

**Brands:** Freightliner

**(c)(2) Vehicles identification:**

**Model(s) affected:** Columbia, Century ST, Coronado, Classic XL,

**Model Years affected:** 2005 thru 2008

**Manufacture Dates:** November 2004 thru August 2007

**Basis for determining population:** Customer field test trucks and certain production vehicles equipped with rack and pinion steering.

**Component manufacturer if other than the vehicle manufacturer:** not applicable

**(c)(3) Total number of vehicles potentially affected:** Approximately 450

**(c)(4) Percentage of vehicles estimated to contain the defect:** less than 10%

**(c)(5) Description of the defect:** Tie rod arms may have been incorrectly installed on trucks with rack and pinion steering. If the RH steering arm is installed on the LH knuckle, excessive tie rod angles may loosen the threaded tie rod socket attachment to the steering gear on the driver side. The threaded end of the ball socket assembly may fracture and separate.

**49CFR Section 577.5(f) Evaluation of the risk to motor vehicle safety:**

A fractured tie rod assembly will make the vehicle more difficult to control at higher speeds and a crash may occur.

**(c)(6) Chronology of principal events:**

The Freightliner Product Validation Department received two reports of separated tie rods on customer seed test vehicles. Investigation determined that the tie rod steering arms had been installed incorrectly, switched side to side, during retrofits to add updated steering components for testing. The incorrect offset on the steering arm created excessive angles at the inner end of the driver side tie rod attachment to the steering gear. Steering loads at low speeds applied at these angles loosened and eventually cracked the ball socket attachment at the threads. The tie rod ball socket separated from the steering rack.

Engineering and Product Validation tested a truck with the driver side tie rod disconnected. At slow speeds, the non-steered front wheel castered and followed the steered wheel. At higher speeds, the non-steered wheel began to oscillate and the truck became more difficult to control.

**(c)(7) Noncompliance-test or other data:** not applicable

**(c)(8) Remedial program:** Repairs will be performed by Freightliner dealerships and Direct Warranty customers, i.e., customers approved by Freightliner to do their own warranty repairs. Owners will be notified approximately October 26, 2007. The vehicles will be inspected for installation of the steering arms. Steering components will be replaced on trucks that have incorrectly installed tie rod arms.

**Estimated Owner Notification Date:** Customer notification will be by first class mail using Freightliner records to determine the customers affected. This will be completed approximately October 26, 2007

**Reimbursement Plan:** All prior repairs have been complete under warranty.

**(c) (9) Communications sent to dealers and owners:** Copies will be submitted as a supplemental report when available.

**(c) (10) Copy of proposed owner notification letter:** A draft will be sent for ODI review when available.

**(c) (11) Manufacturer's campaign number:** FL-512