



DEPARTMENT OF
TRANSPORTATION

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news

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION • NATIONAL HIGHWAY TRAFFIC SAFETY ADMINISTRATION

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June 1977

CASE OF THE MONTH

Reports of Undercarriage Corrosion, 1970-1974 Fiat Models 850, 124 and 128

A safety investigation of chassis rusting in 1970-1974 Fiat 850, 124 and 128 automobiles has recently been initiated. In a Consumer Advisory, released on August 3, 1977, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) cited 71 complaints it has received about chassis deterioration due to rusting in the three Fiat models. The corrosion resembles a problem for which the Company recalled 40,000 1971-1974 Fiat 128 models in 1974. NHTSA will be re-examining the 128's (many were not brought in when the recall was announced) as well as the 850's and 124's.

NHTSA Administrator Joan Claybrook said these Fiat models seem to corrode in the same manner as the recalled models. "In many cases," she noted, "advanced corrosion of vital chassis elements goes undetected until the cars actually become dangerous."

Corrosion damage has been reported in suspension components, wheel attaching points, steering components and floor pans which support the seats. More than 260,000 Fiats were sold in the U.S. between 1970 and 1974. Although many have been junked or repurchased by Fiat, the majority are still in use and may be subject to the corrosion damage.

If any of our PRP members have encountered this condition, we would like to hear from you.

VOLKSWAGEN TO RECALL 1970-74 PORSCHE 914

In a news release dated June 24, 1977, the U.S. Department of Transportation announced that all 1970-1974 Porsche Model 914 vehicles imported into the United States are to be recalled for correction of fuel system problems which could result in engine compartment fires. The actual recall will take place some time in late summer, and will involve approximately 84,000 vehicles imported by Volkswagen of America.

In notifying the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) of its plans, Volkswagen indicated that the recall cannot take place sooner than late summer because repair kits have to be made and assembled by Volkswagen A.G. in Germany and shipped to the United States. Vehicle owners will be notified by the manufacturer when repair kits are available.

NHTSA Administrator Joan Claybrook contacted VW to urge them "to speed up the recall and correction of this very serious safety problem." She advised VW that "a delay of two or three months in correcting a fire problem seemed unwarranted, especially where some of the corrective components may otherwise be readily available."

In February 1977, the NHTSA opened a safety-related investigation involving 1974 Porsche 914 vehicles. The investigation was based on 17 owner complaints alleging the occurrence, without warning, of fuel-fed engine compartment fires.

The investigation shows that the fires are apparently the result of fuel leaks due to fuel hose deterioration from battery acid, or improperly installed sealing rings on fuel injectors. The investigation has also revealed that models other than those produced in 1974 may experience the same problems.

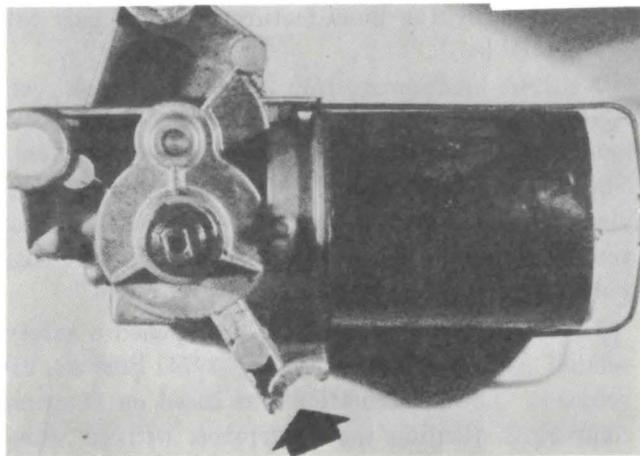
To date, 34 cases of engine compartment fires have been reported; however no reports of injury have been received.

NHTSA Administrator Joan Claybrook repeated an earlier warning to owners of Porsche 914 vehicles. "We urge all owners of Porsche 914 vehicles, regardless of model year, to be alert to any strong odor of gasoline in the passenger compartment, obvious signs of fuel system deterioration, or fuel stains on the surface under parked vehicles. If such symptoms are present, vehicle owners should seek repairs immediately."

Repairs for correction of this problem will include installation of an improved battery cover, installation of a label near the battery warning

owners that overfilling of the battery or removal of the cover may result in deterioration of engine fuel lines, replacement of all flexible fuel lines, and inspection, with replacement if necessary, of all external fuel injector seals.

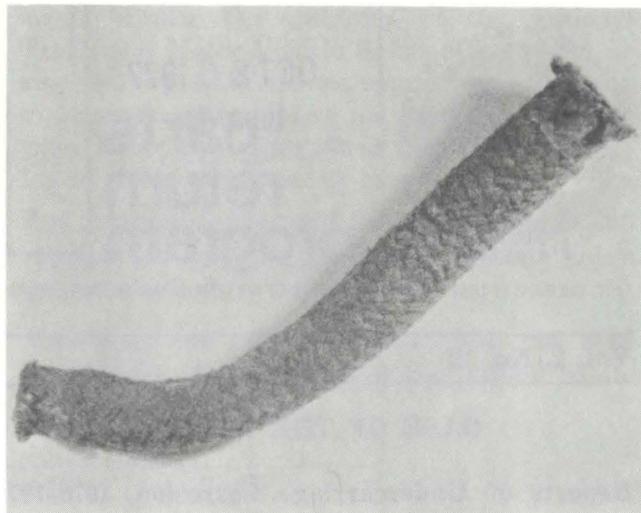
The flexible fuel line shown in the photograph was returned to the PRP by AUTO HOSPITAL in Lincoln, Nebraska, and had been removed from a 1974 Porsche 914 with 43,806 miles. The line was routed from the tank to the fuel pump, located under the vehicle's right rear fender. It reportedly had a sharp bend or crimp near the fuel pump connection and was leaking fuel onto the ground. The shop repaired the problem by installing a longer hose and brackets for support. Special thanks to AUTO HOSPITAL for this input.



FORD WIPER MOTOR FAILURE

The photograph following shows a windshield wiper motor sent in by KOLESNIK'S SERVICE STATION in Rochester, New York. The motor was removed from a 1975 Ford Econoline model 150 Supervan with 28,251 miles. As indicated the outer edge of one of the mounting ears is broken off. Reportedly, the motor pulled loosen from the rubber mounting grommets and fell, jamming both the wiper linkage and motor. The failure reportedly occurred on the expressway during a snowstorm. No accident resulted. The vehicle was purchased new and the owner had not experienced problems with the wipers previously.

When the shop purchased a new replacement motor from a Ford dealer, they found that it was also broken at the same location. Special thanks to KOLESNIK'S SERVICE STATION for returning the part. If your shop has seen a similar failure, please notify the PRP.



ITEM OF INTEREST

UNIVERSAL IMPORTS of Rockville, Maryland, telephoned the PRP concerning the retainer clamp bolts for the steering gear rack (rack and pinion steering) on some Mercury Capris. These retainer clamps (two) are used to secure the steering rack to the vehicle's front frame cross member. The retainer clamp bolts thread directly in the cross member and are locked in by a metal tab at the bolt head.

UNIVERSAL reported that it has encountered several Capris on which these bolts have backed out of position, possibly as a result of normal forces and vibration on the steering rack. The vehicles include a 1974 Capri 2000 with 47,000 miles, and a 1972 Capri 2600 with 63,000 miles. The Capri owners reportedly complained of looseness in the vehicle's steering wheel.

UNIVERSAL IMPORTS repaired the vehicles by installing longer retainer clamp bolts which were threaded through the frame cross member and fastened with a nut.

If your shop has encountered this condition, the PRP would like to hear from you.

TELEPHONE CALLS

If you have any problems regarding this program, are in need of additional mailbag, tags, etc., have any questions, or would like to pass on comments, please call collect. Place your call to Bruce Beddow, Ms. Jonni Peizer, or Guy Whiddon at (703) 527-4500. We are on Eastern Time and are normally available Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

If you have a contribution or suggestion for the PRP NEWS, please send it to Kappa Systems, Inc., 1501 Wilson Boulevard, Arlington, Virginia 22209, Attention: Bruce E. Beddow.

OUTSTANDING SHOPS

Our outstanding shops are those shops that have sent into the PRP at least one part during the current month. The number in parenthesis before a shop's name identifies the number of consecutive months the shop has sent in a part. New shops that have just become active in the PRP are identified with an asterisk before their name. During June 1977, fourteen shops became participants in the PRP. Twelve shops have sent in parts in consecutive months.

REGION 9

DOYLE AUTOMOTIVE SERVICE
Seattle, WA

(3) L.A.D. AUTO ELECTRIC
Spokane, WA

NORM'S AUTO REPAIR
Arlington, WA

SUBURBAN AUTOMOTIVE
Lnywood, WA

REGION 9A

* AUTOMOTIVE SPECIALTIES
Paramount, CA

(3) ISE AUTOMOTIVE SERVICE
Hollywood, CA

* MR. BRAKE #11
Sacramento, CA

REGION 8

* DAVE CLARK AUTOMOTIVE SERVICE
Phoenix, AZ

(2) DUNCAN'S AUTO SERVICE
Phoenix, AZ

HURLEY'S SUPER SERVICE
Pueblo, CO

(2) LAS VEGAS WHEEL ALIGNMENT &
BRAKE
Las Vegas, NV

(2) TERRY MOTOR COMPANY
Beaver, UT

REGION 5

* ADE'S & BOB'S MUFFLER & BRAKE
CENTER

St. Paul, MN

DAY-NITE AUTO SERVICE
Kaukauna, WI

LARRY GAIDA'S SERVICE STATION
Duluth, MN

PARK AUTO SERVICE
Racine, WI

REGION 4

BOB'S SERVICE
Hammond, IN

DOYLE'S SERVICE
Massillon, OH

KORZUN & CORLETTE GARAGE
Euclid, OH

MAY'S AUTO SERVICE
Mansfield, OH



REGION 7

(2) ADAMS MOTOR SERVICE
St. Charles, LA

(2) CLEARVIEW CAR CARE CENTER
Metairie, LA

(2) FIFTH STREET AUTOMOTIVE SERVICE
Tyler, TX

REGION 6

* ATWELL AUTO REPAIR
St. Louis, MO

REGION 3

AUTO SAFETY SERVICE, INC.
Oakland Park, FL

* CHUCK'S SUPER SERVICE
Orlando, FL

* IMPORTS LIMITED
Marietta, GA

WAYNE TERRELL'S GARAGE
Macon, GA

REGION 0

* BRAKE-O-RAMA
Lodi, NJ

CRANE AUTO REPAIR
Bricktown, NJ

DUN ROAMIN GARAGE
Danbury, CT

(9) HARRY'S AUTO SERVICE
Grat Barrington, MA

MAIN STREET CHEVRON
Newtown, CT

REGION 1

* BELMONT GARAGE
Langhorne, PA

* BOROLINE AUTO SERVICE
King of Prussia, PA

* CENTRAL CITY GARAGE
Harrisburg, PA

COCHRAN EQUIPMENT COMPANY
Middletown, DE

(3) FARRELL'S SUNOCO
Fairview Village, PA

(3) KOLESNIK'S SERVICE STATION
Rochester, NY

* A. RUTH GARAGE
Colonia, NY

W & S SERVICE INC.
Wilmington, DE

WOODY'S GARAGE
Mountoursville, PA

REGION 2

(11) AUTO BRAKE CORPORATION
Norfolk, VA

* GARLICK'S GARAGE
Roanoke, VA

JACK STOLTZ'S GARAGE
Winston-Salem, NC

* KINGS PARK EXXON
West Springfield, VA

UNIVERSAL IMPORTS, Rockville, MD

NATIONAL PARTS RETURN PROGRAM

Description and Function

- The PRP involves the voluntary submittal of failed automotive components by independent repair shops. Components are submitted to a representative (Kappa Systems, Inc.) of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).
- The purpose of the PRP is to gather information on these components to help the NHTSA identify the existence of safety-related manufacturing defects in motor vehicles and motor vehicle equip-

ment. Under the authority of the National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act of 1966, as amended, the NHTSA can require manufacturers to conduct safety defect notification campaigns when it has been determined that a defect relating to motor vehicle safety exists.

The information obtained from these parts is also valuable in preparing Federal motor vehicle safety standards.

- Your shop can help. The parts that you send in will give vital information that cannot be obtained in any other way.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
NATIONAL HIGHWAY TRAFFIC SAFETY ADMINISTRATION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20590

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