



news

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

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BRAKE MASTER CYLINDER SURVEY

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) is currently conducting a survey of hydraulic brake master cylinders nationwide. The survey involves the purchase and testing of 400 master cylinders which are representative of the products currently available. The units purchased will include original equipment, new aftermarket, and rebuilt master cylinders. A majority of the units will involve the rebuilt components. The parts will be visually inspected for burrs and contaminants that might shorten component life, and other visible problems which may be present. Subsequent testing will follow the set of standards developed by the Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE).

Nearly 1,000 consumer complaints concerning brake master cylinders have been received by the NHTSA over a period of several years. Last year alone, the Parts Return Program (PRP) received 89 master cylinders. These parts were removed from various domestic and foreign passenger cars and light trucks, and ranged from original equipment and aftermarket parts with only a few thousand miles at the time of failure, to parts which failed after nearly 100,000 miles of service. One master cylinder was found leaking after only 300 miles of service.

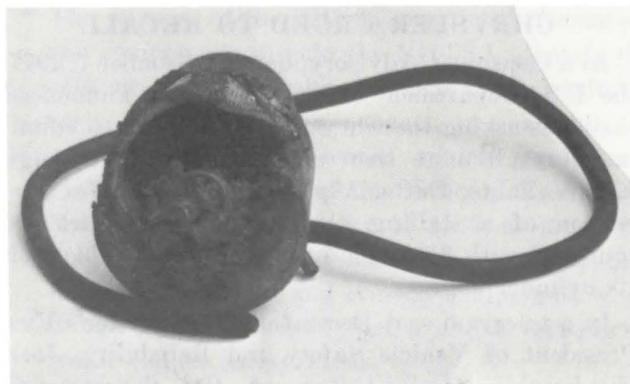
The purpose of this survey is to identify any master cylinders that are being manufactured with safety defects. If you have replaced a problem master cylinder or have information on master cylinders that have failed prematurely or under unusual circumstances, please contact us by using your Information Report form or by calling the PRP collect. If the component is available, please forward it to us in a PRP mailbag. The information you submit will greatly help.

FUEL VAPOR CANISTER FIRE

The charred fuel vapor canister shown in the photograph was removed from a 1974 Fiat, 124 Special sedan by AUTOMOTIVE SPECIALTIES of Paramount, California. The vehicle had 27,735 miles, and the component was original equipment.

The unit was mounted, according to the shop, approximately three inches from the exhaust manifold. The canister reportedly caught fire without warning while the vehicle was in motion, burning hoses and wires before it was extinguished by the driver. AUTOMOTIVE SPECIALTIES believes that the fire was due to the location of the canister. The shop states that the area where the component mounted can become quite hot, enough to possibly ignite fuel vapors which accumulate in the canister. The shop also stated that they service this vehicle regularly, and are aware of no overheating problems with it. Having checked other Fiat Special sedans, they note that the mounting of the fuel vapor canisters is the same.

Thank you, AUTOMOTIVE SPECIALTIES, for sending us the part. Should any PRP members encounter similar fires or symptoms in this model, please notify us immediately by sending the part in a PRP mailbag, using the Information Report form, or calling us collect.



Burned Fuel Vapor Canister & Hose
1974 Fiat Special Sedan
AUTOMOTIVE SPECIALTIES

BROKEN DRIVE SHAFT

DAVE KYLE'S GARAGE in Phoenix, Arizona, has submitted a rear U-joint and portion of the drive shaft, removed from a 1977 Ford LTD with 20,037 miles. The vehicle was equipped with a 400 CID engine and automatic transmission. According to the shop, the drive shaft broke away from the U-joint and twisted off while the operator was

driving at approximately 10 mph. The photograph shows the U-joint, and a portion of the drive shaft which was cut for shipping. The shop believes that the drive shaft failed due to a faulty weld between it and the U-joint yoke. The U-joint yokes operate freely and appear to be well lubricated. Although the drive shaft was destroyed, no accident or other damage occurred.

Special thanks to KYLE'S for this part. Should any of our participants note this condition on a vehicle, please notify us.



Rear U-Joint and Drive Shaft (cut for shipping)
1977 Ford LTD

DAVE KYLE'S GARAGE

CHRYSLER URGED TO RECALL

In a Consumer Advisory, dated December 7, 1977, the U.S. Department of Transportation announced that it is asking the Chrysler Corporation to voluntarily recall more than one million 1975 through 1977 Valiants, Darts, Aspens, and Volares for correction of a stalling problem. The vehicles are equipped with 318 cubic inch V-8 or 225 cubic inch six-cylinder engines.

In a telegram sent December 6 to Chrysler's Vice President of Vehicle Safety and Reliability, Joan Claybrook, Administrator of the department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), urged voluntary recall "in the interest of safety and to obviate the delay in and the necessity of further investigative effort, and the scheduling of administrative enforcement proceedings." In her telegram, the NHTSA Administrator said that she had learned, through press releases, that the Chrysler Corporation has admitted the existence of a stalling problem, but claims it is not safety-

related. She pointed out that Chrysler recently conducted a safety-related defect recall campaign involving 1972 and 1973 full-size Chrysler vehicles because of a defective electrical connector which could cause loss of engine power. Claybrook told the Chrysler executive that "the stalling of later model Chrysler vehicles appears equally hazardous."

In May, 1977, the NHTSA opened an investigation into stalling problems affecting these vehicles. To date, the federal safety agency has received 998 owner complaint letters alleging 1,200 incidents of stalling, including reports of 52 accidents involving nine injuries and nine lawsuits. The NHTSA said Chrysler estimates it has some 4,500 consumer letters reporting stalling in the subject vehicles.

Our PRP members will recall that this investigation was featured in a Case Of The Month article in the July, 1977 issue of the PRP News.

REMINDER

We ask that our PRP participants continue to be alert for components and information related to the following NHTSA defect investigations. These cases are still continuing and have been featured in past issues of the PRP News:

- Transmission Shift Linkage Failures, 1973-78 Ford Motor Company Passenger Cars Equipped with 351 CID or Larger Engines and Automatic Transmissions
- Ignition Amplifier Failures, 1975-77 Spitfire, TR-7, MGB, MG Midget, and Jaguar XJ6, and 1971-77 Jaguar XJ12 Vehicles (British Leyland)
- Engine Stalling, 1975-76 Dodge Dart and Plymouth Valiant, and 1976-77 Dodge Aspen and Plymouth Volare Vehicles Equipped with 318 CID V-8 or 225 CID Six Cylinder Engines
- Undercarriage Corrosion, 1970-74 Fiat Models 850, 124, and 128

TELEPHONE CALLS

If you have any problems regarding this program, are in need of additional supplies, e.g., mailbags or information report forms, have any questions, or would like to pass on comments, please call collect. Our phone number is (703) 527-4500; ask for the Parts Return Program. Our staff, Bruce Beddow, Guy Whiddon, Ms. Jonni Peizer, and Martin Lowery, will be happy to assist. 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 the Parts Return Program, c/o Kappa Systems, Inc., 1501 Wilson Boulevard, Arlington, Virginia 22209.

ITEMS OF INTEREST

- We've mentioned that we're expanding the Parts Return Program to include new car dealers and high mileage fleets, and automotive parts suppliers. We will be contacting a total of 300 dealers, 100 fleets (car rental, taxi, and police and other state and municipal vehicles), and 300 parts suppliers nationwide to enlist their voluntary participation in the Program. As of this date, approximately 50% of these 700 potential participants have been contacted. On the average, approximately 70% of the dealers contacted have expressed their willingness to join the program, while most all of the fleets and parts suppliers contacted have agreed to join.
- New Jersey's Division of Consumer Affairs recently inspected 1,781 of the state's auto repair facilities to check on compliance with their regulation requiring the posting of notices on consumer rights. Of this group, 564 were found to not have a posted notice informing customers that they are entitled to written estimates for repair work before the work is started. Some of the repair shops could be fined up to \$200, and included new and used car dealerships, service stations, body repair shops, specialty automotive repair shops, and chain and department store repair facilities.
- Chrysler Corporation is recalling 1.2 million cars for two problems that could result in loss of front wheel brakes. The vehicles involved are 1976-78 Plymouth Volares and Dodge Aspens manufactured from October 1975 through September 1977, and 1977-78 Dodge Diplomats and Chrysler LeBarons manufactured from March 1977 through September 23, 1977. The two problems involve (1) the front wheel brake tubes which may be subject to corrosion from acid seeping from the battery, and (2) the front brake hoses may become brittle and crack when subjected to sustained periods of extreme cold temperatures. The hose problem does not involve 1977 models, built after July 28, 1977, and 1978 models.
- Motor vehicle accidents cost American society nearly \$38 billion annually, in terms of deaths, injuries, lost income and property damage, according to a recent study compiled by the NHTSA and entitled "Societal Costs of Motor Vehicle Accidents, 1975."

The statistics are based on societal losses resulting from fatalities, non-fatal injuries, and property damage only accidents, and do not represent the total value placed upon human life. Future production losses, in particular, accounted for a very large share of the total cost for fatalities and the most severe injuries.

The 46,800 motor vehicle fatalities listed by the report for 1975 produced losses to society of \$13.44 billion. The cost for non-fatal injuries was \$12.75 billion, and property damage only accidents \$11.40 billion. Based on the factors considered, a fatality accounts for \$287,175 in societal costs; recognizing that this figure does not represent the total value of a lost life.

A free copy of the report is available from the NHTSA, General Services Division, Room 4423, 400 Seventh St., S.W., Washington, D.C. 20590.

NATIONAL PARTS RETURN PROGRAM

Description and Function

- The PRP involves the voluntary submittal of failed automotive components and information by participating members. The program is open to independent repair shops, new car dealers, independent parts suppliers, and fleet operators. Information and/or failed parts 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 and components to help the NHTSA identify the existence of safety-related defects in the performance, construction, components, or materials of motor vehicles and motor vehicle equipment. 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 recall and remedy campaigns, when it has been determined that a defect relating to motor vehicle safety exists.
- The information obtained is also valuable in preparing Federal motor vehicle safety standards.
- You can help. The components and information that you send in will give vital information that cannot be obtained in any other way.

OUTSTANDING PARTICIPANTS

Our outstanding participants are those that have sent to the PRP at least one component or item of information during the current month. The number in parentheses before a participant's name identifies the number of consecutive months that participant has sent in components and information. New members that have just become active in the PRP for this year (July 1977-June 1978) are identified with an asterisk before their name. During November 1977, 22 members became new active participants, and 7 have sent in components and information in consecutive months. We need more active participants. Please make your contribution toward highway traffic safety today.

REGION 5

(2) CLEMENS AUTO REPAIR

Racine, Wisconsin

DAY-NITE AUTO STATION

Kaukauna, Wisconsin

* FRERICHS GARAGE

Sioux City, Iowa

ROEHL'S BEE LINE BRAKE AND ALIGNMENT

Appleton, Wisconsin

REGION 4

* AKRON WHEEL ALIGNMENT

Akron, Ohio

* LEXINGTON BRAKE

Lexington, Kentucky

REGION 0

CRANE AUTO REPAIR

Bricktown, New Jersey

* FLANDER'S BRAKE AND ALIGNMENT

Hartford, Connecticut

* GENE CASEY'S ARCO STATION

Lynn, Massachusetts

GLIDDEN AUTO SERVICE

Nashua, New Hampshire

(5) HARRY'S AUTO SERVICE

Great Barrington, Massachusetts

REGION 1

* A. RUTH'S GARAGE

Colonia, New York

WOODY'S GARAGE

Montoursville, Pennsylvania

REGION 2

(5) AUTO BRAKE CORPORATION

Norfolk, Virginia

* YON BROTHERS' GARAGE

Charleston, South Carolina

* MARYLAND BRAKE AND ALIGNMENT

Baltimore, Maryland

REGION 3

(5) BIG BRAKE SAFETY CENTER

Gulfport, Mississippi

* ROSWELL FINA

Roswell, Georgia

REGION 9A

* AUTOMOTIVE SPECIALTIES

Paramount, California

* DANA MEYER FOREIGN CAR SERVICE

Albany, California

ISE AUTOMOTIVE SERVICE

Hollywood, California

* KALLEN'S GARAGE

Van Nuys, California

MAURICE'S AUTOMOTIVE

Hollywood, California

(2) MR. BRAKE #11

Sacramento, California

* PRECISION AUTO REPAIR

San Francisco, California

REGION 8

* CARTER'S AUTO SERVICE

Santa Fe, New Mexico

* HURLEY SUPER SERVICE STATION

Pueblo, Colorado

JOHN'S GARAGE

Nampa, Idaho

LAS VEGAS WHEEL ALIGNMENT AND BRAKE

Las Vegas, Nevada

* MERRILL'S AUTOMOTIVE SERVICE

Salt Lake City, Utah

* RIVERSIDE AUTOMOTIVE

Boise, Idaho

* STAPLE'S CHEVRON STATION

Colorado Springs, Colorado

* ZENNER AUTOMOTIVE

Colorado Springs, Colorado

REGION 6

* ATWELL AUTO REPAIR

St. Louis, Missouri

* CAPITAL AUTOMOTIVE

Lincoln, Nebraska

(2) DUTCH'S SERVICE STATION

St. Louis, Missouri

REGION 7

(2) FIFTH STREET AUTOMOTIVE SERVICE

Tyler, Texas

* TOMMY'S AUTOMOTIVE

San Angelo, Texas



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