



parts
return
program

news

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

Vol. 3, No. 7

January-February 1978

MORE FLEX-FANS

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) recently initiated another safety defect investigation involving flexible blade, engine cooling fans (flex-fans).

The investigation involves approximately 200,000 flex-fans manufactured since 1973 by Kool Klutch Manufacturing Co. of Fort Worth, Texas, a division of Eaglemotive Industries, Inc. The NHTSA is investigating reports of breaking fan blades which could result in personal injury and vehicle damage. These flex-fans are sold in the automotive parts after-market under the brand names Kool Flex and Imperial. The NHTSA is aware of 13 reports of flex-fan breakage, three involving injuries.

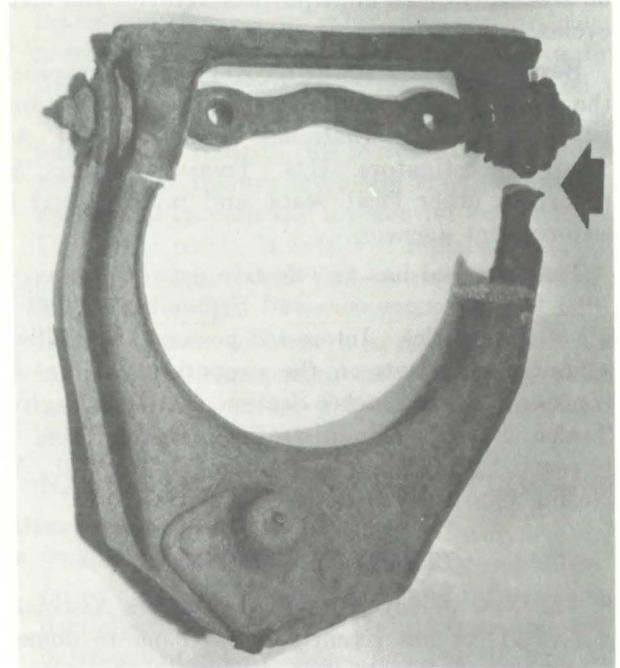
Again, we urge our participants to remain alert for the failure of any flex-fan, and to report such failures to the PRP immediately.

RUSTING CONTROL ARMS

AKRON WHEEL ALIGNMENT, Akron, Ohio, forwarded to the Parts Return Program some upper and lower front control arms from a 1977 Ford Pinto with 37,872 miles. The upper control arm pictured here is rusted through at the bushing location. The control arm bushings are partially deteriorated and the ball joint is frozen. The lower control arm was rusted through at the spring mount.

The rusting was discovered during a front end alignment inspection. Performance of the vehicle had not been impaired. The shop believes that the corrosion may have been due to vehicle contact with some sort of acidic material from an external source. No other Pintos have developed this problem, according to the shop, although they have seen similar corrosion on 1967-69 Ford Mustang vehicles.

Our thanks to AKRON WHEEL ALIGNMENT for submitting this information. If any PRP participants note similar rust problems, please send us the part, call us collect, or drop us a note on the convenient Information Report Form.



Upper Control Arm
1977 Ford Pinto

AKRON WHEEL ALIGNMENT

PROPOSED STANDARDIZATION OF VEHICLE IDENTIFICATION NUMBER

Motor vehicle identification will be strengthened and standardized under a new proposal announced on January 16, 1978, by the U.S. Department of Transportation.

The action arises from a proposal by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to amend Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard No. 115, to specify the structure and meaning of numerals and letters used in a motor vehicle's Vehicle Identification Number (VIN).

"This is a very important proposal," said NHTSA Administrator Joan Claybrook in a news release on January 16, 1978. "It will be of great value in combating auto theft and conducting efficient safety recall campaigns and for accident investigation research."

Currently, the standard requires only that a VIN be on passenger cars, be unique to a particular

manufacturer in any 10 year period, and be located so that it is readable from outside the vehicle. The proposed amendment would require manufacturers to provide a VIN that would uniquely identify each motor vehicle, without duplication, for a 30 year period. The new VIN would contain 16 characters plus a check digit. For passenger cars, the VIN would identify the manufacturer, make and class of the vehicle, model, line, series, body type, engine type, gross vehicle weight rating, transmission type, restraint system type, and the year of manufacture. Similar information would be required for VINs on trucks, trailers, multipurpose vehicles and motorcycles.

Beyond its value in the recovery of stolen vehicles, the VIN is important to state motor vehicle administrators, the International Association of Auto Theft Investigators, U.S. Treasury agents, and numerous other local, state, and international law enforcement agencies.

The proposal has an effective date of January 1, 1980 for passenger cars and September 1, 1981 for all other vehicles. Interested persons are invited to submit their views on the proposal by addressing comments to the Docket Section, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Room 5108, 400 Seventh St., S.W., Washington, D.C. 20590. The closing date for comments is April 17, 1978.

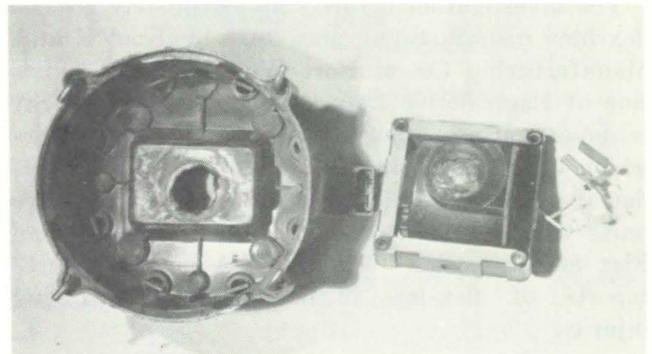
ITEMS OF INTEREST

- The New Jersey Automobile Dealers Association (NJADA) has recently pointed out to domestic car manufacturers that dealers in the state are covered by New Jersey's warranty reimbursement law, effective May, 1977. The law requires the same reimbursement scale for warranty work as is normally used for non-warranty work. NJADA argues that dealers continue to receive reimbursement for warranty work that is "unilaterally and arbitrarily determined" by manufacturers. The NJADA has indicated that such reimbursement has the effect of penalizing dealers and ultimately consumers.
- Lindenbusch Lincoln-Mercury in St. Louis, Missouri, called our attention to a binding accelerator cable in a 1977 Mercury Monarch with a vehicle mileage of 8,451. The cable had reportedly been misrouted.
- The City of Tallahassee, Florida, has forwarded two steering pitman arms to us which were both removed from 1977 Dodge Monaco vehicles. The ball joints in each are extremely loose, which reportedly resulted in excessive steering play.

BURNT DISTRIBUTOR

The BALTIMORE COUNTY CENTRAL GARAGE, Towson, Maryland, has sent us the distributor from a 1975 Chevrolet van equipped with electronic ignition. The photograph shows the distributor cap and ignition coil. According to the maintenance department at Baltimore County, the center of the rotor burned a hole in the distributor cap and the bottom of the coil. The van had 37,937 miles on it.

Special thanks to BALTIMORE COUNTY for being the first fleet to contribute information to the newly expanded PRP. If any of our other participants encounter problems in the electronic ignition systems of General Motors vehicles, please forward the information to us.



Distributor Cap and Ignition Coil
(Electronic Ignition)
1975 Chevrolet Van

BALTIMORE COUNTY CENTRAL GARAGE

TELEPHONE CALLS

If you want to report vehicle/component failures, are in need of additional supplies, e.g., mailbags, tags, or information report forms, have any questions, or would like to pass on comments, please Call Collect: (703) 527-4500. Our staff, Bruce Beddow, Guy Whiddon, and Martin Lowery, will be happy to assist. We are on Eastern Time and are 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.

RECALLS

- Approximately 2,000 *Plymouth Horizon* and *Dodge Omni* 1978 model vehicles are being recalled for replacement of leaky fuel tanks damaged during assembly.

In a recent consumer advisory, Joan Claybrook, Administrator of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), said "this recall is the result of action we initiated after receiving a report on January 20 of fuel tank leakage from the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. The IIHS had purchased two new Horizon vehicles for a test program and, when filling the fuel tanks, significant fuel leakage was noted." An investigation determined that leakage was caused by a power-driven staple that had been driven through the floor pan to secure the carpet under the rear seat cushion. These staples had punctured the tank and allowed leakage.

On January 20, the NHTSA notified the Chrysler Corp. of the problem and urged immediate recall action. Upon investigation, the manufacturer reported that the staple causing the problem was used as an unauthorized assembly aid at one Chrysler assembly plant. They agreed to recall the vehicles for fuel tank replacement.

- More than 74,000 of the 1972 and 1973 *Toyota Celica* vehicles are being recalled for replacement of the passenger compartment heater hose.

In a recent consumer advisory, Joan Claybrook, NHTSA Administrator, said "this recall is the result of agency action on reports of three heater hose failures in which hot coolant was sprayed on the legs of the drivers. We realize that heater hoses do wear out and need periodic replacement. However, these particular hoses failed without prior warning due to internal damage. Such sudden failure, coupled with the spraying of hot liquid on the driver's legs, could result in possible loss of vehicle control."

Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A., Inc., says the problem involves the formed inlet heater hose which is located in the passenger compartment. During the installation of the heater hose to the heater water valve, the end of the water valve pipe is connected to the curved portion of the hose. If a sharp edge exists, the inside of the hose can be scuffed, shortening its service life. Recall correction will involve replacement of curved hoses with improved, straight hoses and removal of any sharp edges on the water pipes. Required parts are being ordered from Japan and should

be available in early March, at which time owners will be notified.

- More than 118,000 *Honda motorcycles* are being recalled to correct a safety defect that could impair braking in wet weather.

Honda is recalling 1975-1978 models CB750F and GL 1000 cycles built with rear disc brakes. The NHTSA has been investigating reports of wet weather brake malfunctions in these motorcycles since April 1977, and had received 72 owner complaints and reports of 11 injuries. The problem is described as a temporary reduction in rear brake effectiveness in rainy weather. Although normal braking efficiency resumes after a brief time, operators tend to increase pressure on the brakes when there is no initial response. As normal braking returns, this increased brake pressure may exceed the available tire traction and cause rear wheel lock-up and a potential loss of control. Under the recall, Honda will replace the original equipment rear brake pads with new pads of an improved design. The company said it will be sending letters to owners in mid-March explaining the recall campaign, and instructing them to contact Honda motorcycle dealers to obtain the replacement rear brake pads.

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 the participant has sent in components and information. New members who have just become active in the PRP for this year (July 1977 to June 1978) are identified with an asterisk before their name. This month, 13 members became new active participants and four have sent in components or information in consecutive months. We need more active participants. Please make your contribution toward highway traffic safety today.

REGION 5

- * AUTO TRAAC
St. Anthony, MN
- * DAVE McMILLEN'S AUTO REPAIR SERVICE
Duluth, MN
- * DOLLAR RENT-A-CAR
Sioux City, IA
- * IMPORT MACHINE
Kewaunee, WI

REGION 9

- * CHUCK & WAYNE'S GARAGE
Eugene, OR

REGION 9A

- * DUANE'S TUNE-UP CLINIC
Manteca, CA
- * TOM PITRE: AUTO MECHANICS
Los Altos, CA

REGION 4

- AKRON WHEEL ALIGNMENT
Akron, OH
- KORZUN & CORLETTE'S GARAGE
Euclid, OH



REGION 0

- (7) HARRY S AUTO SERVICE
Great Barrington, MA

REGION 1

- (2) BUD JONES SERVICE
Delmar, NY
- * RITE-WAY GARAGE
Harrisburg, PA
- VINS MOTOR SERVICE CORPORATION
Brooklyn, NY

REGION 2

- (7) AUTO BRAKE CORPORATION
Norfolk, VA
- * BALTIMORE COUNTY CENTRAL GARAGE
Towson, MD

REGION 3

- (7) BIG BRAKE SAFETY CENTER
Gulfport, MS
- * CITY OF TALLAHASSEE
Tallahassee, FL
- * HAGAN SERVICE CENTER
Gainesville, FL
- TERRELL'S GARAGE
Macon, GA

REGION 6

- * LINDENBUSCH LINCOLN-MERCURY
St. Louis, MO
- * NATURAL BRIDGE AUTO PARTS
St. Louis, MO

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

OFFICIAL BUSINESS
PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE, \$300

POSTAGE AND FEES PAID
NATIONAL HIGHWAY TRAFFIC
SAFETY ADMINISTRATION
DOT 517

