



parts return program

news

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

Vol. 4, No. 5-6

November-December 1978

GM RECALLS 1975 MONZA STARFIRE, SKYHAWK

General Motors recently announced that it will recall some 130,000 1975 V-8 equipped Chevrolet Monzas, Oldsmobile Starfires and Buick Skyhawks for a front wheel bearing problem. As reported in the May 1978 issue of the PRP News, grease may not be adequately retained in the front wheel bearing under heavy brake application, due to the heat softening the grease. GM received three reports of accidents and one injury due to this condition.

The remedy will entail the addition of newly developed grease retainers and seals in the front wheel hubs to improve grease retention. GM has indicated that new outer wheel bearings will be installed and inner ones checked for damage. All bearings will be repacked with the recommended GM grease. Parts should be available in January 1979, at which time owners will be notified.

Special thanks to FARRELL'S SUNOCO STATION, Fairview Village, Pa., who contributed parts from a '75 Monza. Thanks also to our other members who contributed related info.

A picture is worth a thousand words (well, maybe not that many) but not a single part.

We have noticed an increase in the number of photographs accompanying failure reports and we like it. Many have been the Polaroid or self developing type. Photos are particularly useful in conveying informa-

tion on parts or failures that are repaired on the vehicle. Frame cracking is a good example. They are also a good way to show the extent of damages caused by a failure, a fire for instance. A report documented with photos carries more weight should an investigation into the problem be opened.

In addition, many of the photos contained in the News have been sent in by members. Next time you have a part that must be returned to the customer or manufacturer, cannot be removed, or is too big to send in, "picture it" with your info report.

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THE ADMINISTRATOR

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

Dear PRP Member:

I want to take time out this holiday season to thank all of you for your participation in our Parts Return Program (PRP), particularly those of you who have been active participants this past year.

We are very proud of the PRP and the contributions it has made to motor vehicle safety. As many of you know, the Program has now been in operation for over 7 years. During that time, over 7,000 failed automotive components and information have been received from approximately 700 participants. These components and the related information have been crucial to the support of many of our safety defect investigations and resultant recalls, and have served often as early warning indicators of vehicle safety problems. Please take a moment today and jot down on the Information Report form any information concerning a possible vehicle or equipment defect that you may have noticed in the last few days. Drop it in the mail to us, and let the manufacturer know as well, so that we can all work to improve motor vehicle safety. Believe me, data from you can do more to isolate a problem in its early stages than from any other source.

I want to also mention that we have received enthusiastic response from new car dealers, fleets, and automotive parts suppliers about joining the Program. Almost 90% of those visited expressed their interest in joining the PRP.

Again, I thank all of you for your support.

Joan Claybrook
Joan Claybrook



PICTURE IT

NHTSA STEPS UP INVESTIGATION OF VW RABBIT MASTER CYLINDERS

As originally reported in our May, 1977 issue of the PRP News, the PRP has received a number of reports regarding problems in VW Rabbit master cylinders. Since that time, numerous complaints have been received by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) on Rabbits and other models indicating a widespread problem.

For this reason, the NHTSA is extending its inquiry into VW master cylinders to include 1975-78 Rabbit and Scirocco master cylinders, and 1974-78 Dasher and Audi master cylinders.

Your help on this review is urgently needed. The NHTSA requests any failed Rabbit, Scirocco, Audi and Dasher master cylinders for testing purposes. Please do not disassemble the cylinder before sending it to the PRP.



1979 GAS MILEAGE GUIDE

Free copies of the first edition of the 1979 Gas Mileage were made available to the public the first week in November. The Departments of Energy and Transportation have compiled information pertaining to new cars, station wagons and light truck models and the estimated miles-per-gallon rating for each type of vehicle.

The 1979 edition no longer gives the values previously called "highway" and "combined" mpg. The

A description of the circumstances surrounding the failure is also quite important. For example, did the pedal go to the floor? Was there a forewarning such as sluggish braking action? gradual wear? Was the warning light on for a period of time before the failure occurred? Did an accident result?

Along with information on the circumstances of the failure, please note the following items as well: vehicle identification number, mileage at failure, vehicle model, whether the part was original equipment or a replacement, whether the part had been replaced more than once, etc.

If the part is not available, please record all information on the information report form and send it as soon as possible to the PRP.

value previously named "city" estimate is now called the "estimated mpg." Studies showed that of the three previous values, the city number was the closest to the actual average fuel economy in real driving.

New car dealers are required by law to display the guides in their showrooms and to keep an adequate supply on hand. Bulk copies can be requested from Fuel Economy Distribution, Office of Administrative Services, Department of Energy, Washington, D.C. 20545.

FIRESTONE 500 RECALL UPDATE

On October 24, 1978, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), received the agreement from the Firestone Tire and Rubber Co., calling for the recall of Firestone 500 Steel Belted Radial Tires and Firestone TPC Steel Radial Tires under the terms announced on October 20.

In announcing the recall, Secretary of the Department of Transportation remarked "it is fashionable today to attack the government's regulatory powers. The Firestone case, however, shows the wisdom of allowing citizens to use their government to force action that they could not gain as individuals".

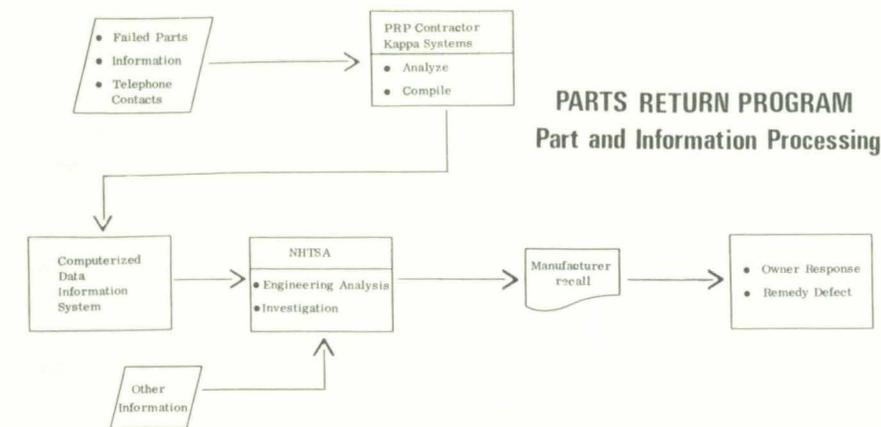
The tires involved in the recall are those Steel Belted 500's made with the five-rib design manufactured before Jan. 1, 1977. The 500's made with the seven-rib design and TPC radial tires will be included if manufactured before May 1, 1976.

The Parts Return Program would like to give special thanks to those members who have contributed to the case by information they have come across. These members are GOTHAM AUTO LEASE, New Rochelle, NY, AUTOMOTIVE CITY SERVICE CENTER, San Francisco, CA, JOHN'S UNION SERVICE, Seattle, WA, SCHUBERTS AUTO SUPPLY, Poughkeepsie, NY, HENNIKER AUTOMOTIVE, Henniker, NH, and A&A AUTO SUPPLY, Boulder, CO.

TELEPHONE CALLS

If you have information for the PRP or are in need of supplies, please give us a collect call at 703/527-4500. We'll be more than happy to take the information over the phone.

WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO THAT PART I RETURNED? PART III



Last issue we considered the engineering analysis/defect investigation process within the NHTSA which can lead to a recall. Our concluding article in this series shows what steps are required of the manufacturer by the National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act (the Act), and supporting regulations.

First, the manufacturer submits to NHTSA a defect information report which outlines what vehicles and how many are affected, a description of the defect, and a description of the corrective measure to be taken. The manufacturer then has three options to remedy the defect: (a) by repairing the vehicle without charge, (b) by replacing the vehicle with a reasonably equivalent one, (c) by refunding the purchase price less allowance for depreciation. In the case of replacement equipment, this can only be repaired or replaced, with no refunds. In most cases, a vehicle is modified to prevent a failure, or to preclude any safety consequences as a result of the failure.

Once the manufacturer has elected one of these options he then notifies dealers of the upcoming action. Dealers must receive equitable reimbursement for their efforts in performing the correction action.

Next the owners are notified by first class mail. The letter should mo-

tivate an owner to get his vehicle inspected or corrected as soon as possible. This letter must contain: (1) a description of the defect, (2) an evaluation of the risk involved, (3) what action will be taken to remedy the defect, (4) state that it will be without charge, (5) state when the parts or remedy will be available and in the case of tires, the time limit (60 days) in which they must be replaced and (6) the procedures to contact NHTSA if unreasonable difficulty is experienced in obtaining corrective action.

Is the manufacturer's obligation limited in any way by the Act? Yes, in the case of a vehicle over 8 years old, the manufacturer is not bound to remedy the defect without charge. This is 3 years in the case of tires. There is also no provision in the Act for reimbursement of, (a) damages or expenses incurred as a result of a defect or, (b) expenses to repair a defect prior to the official determination that it exists.

Now, if all this sounds legalistic, it is. We hope though, that by reading this article you have gained a better understanding of what a safety recall is all about. We hope that this series has given you an idea of the special part you play in the process. NHTSA needs the knowledgeable, timely reports that only you can provide!

PRP MEMBERS RESPOND TO AMPLIFIER PROBLEMS

In the April, 1978 issue of the PRP News, failure of Ford ignition amplifiers was discussed. More inputs have been received by the PRP regarding this. Wayne Wheeler of WAYNE'S GARAGE in Eugene, Oregon, submitted to the PRP an ignition amplifier from a 1978 4-cylinder Ford Pinto with 20,218 miles. The car stalled and could not be restarted. Several checks were run on the ignition amplifier with no positive results. The amplifier was replaced, and this apparently corrected the problem.

Mr. Robert L. Leu, Parts and Service Manager at V & H FORD in Marshfield, Wisconsin also mentioned that he was aware of a problem.

Larry Fox of FOX AUTOMOTIVE in Tulsa, Oklahoma reported to the PRP an explanation of a problem, which he has also seen. Sometimes the resistance wire on the amplifier which carries approximately 1.6 ohms resistance can crack internally and thereby cause an intermittent connection. Visual inspection cannot detect this crack. Electrical testing of this possible cause should be included before an entire unit is replaced.

Donna Foran of TIM'S IMPORT SALES AND SERVICE, Hutchinson, Kansas, reports a failed ignition amplifier from a 1975 MGB Roadster with 34,000 miles. The failure of this component caused intermittent stalling of the vehicle.

The NHTSA is currently looking into problems with Ford ignition amplifiers and needs whatever information is available from the field.

AMC VACUUM ADVANCE

ROPE GARAGE, Cibolo, Texas, reports a distributor problem on a 1977 American Motors Pacer. The spring holding down the distributor cap was, according to the shop, catching on a wire and causing an electrical short. The result—complete engine shut-down. A ruptured vacuum advance diaphragm was also reported.

The NHTSA has reports that a ruptured diaphragm can be responsible for the distributor cap blowing off in some 1975–76 AMC vehicles. When the engine is shut off, a vacuum in the cap draws an air fuel mixture from the intake manifold into the distributor. On restarting, the distributor cap can blow off due to the combustible mixture. If this happens often enough, the springs holding the cap can weaken and may need replacement. Replacement clips are available from AMC, we understand.

If you note this problem, the first place to look is the vacuum advance unit. Next, please report the information to the PRP. Thanks.

UNIROYAL TIRES

Joyce Lyons of American Hospital Supply/Scientific Products Division in McGaw Park, IL reported problems involving two Uniroyal tires. The tires were Uniroyal Steel Belted radials, size HR78–15, both on the same vehicle. These tires developed belt separation (one at 32,000 miles the other at 49,000 miles), which created balancing and alignment problems. A rough ride brought attention to the tires. If you have encountered similar problems with any steel radial tires, please send us the information.

FAILED PARTS, NO PARTS

B. W. RILEY ALIGNMENT AND BRAKE SERVICE of Springfield, Virginia, has contacted the PRP regarding the brake power booster unit on Chevrolet Luv pick-up trucks. Riley's encountered a 1976 Luv pick-up suffering from erratic braking. The apparent problem, according to the shop, resulted from the breaking of the master cylinder pushrod on the atmospheric side of the diaphragm in the power booster. The pushrod reportedly comes apart in the rubber, and Riley's has seen this in other Luv vehicles before.

After diagnosing the problem and determining that a replacement part be obtained, Riley's was faced with still another problem; no parts could be located on the east coast. Deal-

ers in the east were reportedly not stocking OEM parts for two year old vehicles. It was explained to the PRP that this is a common occurrence often causing inconvenience for the shop as well as the shop's customers.

Although the PRP can do nothing directly to help, we may be able to pass along info from our member shops, part suppliers and dealers concerning some hard to find parts. Let us know what you think. Part suppliers, dealers: If an item which could cause safety problems suddenly becomes a hot seller, let the PRP know. It could indicate the start of a widespread problem.



Recently, the PRP received a letter from Frank Hornyak, a former director of the Ohio Chapter of the Independent Garage Owners of America, Inc., (IGO). Mr. Hornyak, who has retired from the service industry, provided us with photographs and information concerning corrosion damage to the under-carriages of vehicles exposed to salt and other ice preventive road additives. The photograph shows a vehicle which reportedly came apart at the front door posts as it was hoisted on a front end lift. Hornyak commented that this is a common hazard particularly where salt and other chemicals are utilized for ice and snow removal. With winter on the move, all PRP members should be aware of potentially dangerous corrosion situations.

THE FORUM

WALES GARAGE in Fort Lauderdale, Florida has contacted the PRP regarding an EGR plate from a Ford vehicle with 48,000 miles on the odometer. The metal of the plate was eaten away causing engine stalling periodically. Wales installed a replacement.

Also received from Wales' Garage was information concerning the cruise controls on Lincoln Continentals. The vehicle in question was a 1973 Continental Mark IV with approximately 50,000 miles. The shop reported that the control would not shut off by stepping on the brake or by operating the switch on the steering wheel. This condition has been seen on other Ford vehicles equipped with cruise control, by the shop.

Lee Davis of L.A.D. Auto Electric in Spokane, WA, has submitted to the PRP several turn signal switch assemblies, primarily from Ford products, where one or more turn signal indicator or brake lights fail to operate. In some cases, there is a short of some kind however, the fuse did not blow. This can cause the wire to get hot and in some cases melt the synthetic covering. The shop believes that one possible problem is that the switches are not compatible with the recommended fuse amperage.

Bill Duncan of Duncan's Auto in Phoenix, AZ, reported to the PRP a possible problem with 318 V-8 equipped Plymouth Volares. The problem involved a 1976 Volare ring and pinion gear assembly. The ring gear attaching bolts backed out and locked the ring against the housing. This caused the vehicle to stop in the middle of the street. The shop believes that the ring and pinion gear seems too small (7 1/4") for the V-8 engine drive train.

AUTO HOSPITAL, Lincoln, Nebraska, reported to the PRP a 1978 Dodge Pickup (150 series) that had apparently been delivered from the factory with a broken coil spring and bent frame. The third coil from the bottom of the right front spring was broken, causing a hard ride and difficult steering. The vehicle was driven for approximately three weeks before the problem was discovered and repaired.

Dave Miller of ROXBURY GARAGE, Roxbury, CT, has submitted to the PRP information and photos concerning a 1977 Plymouth Volare with 19,000 miles. The vehicle is equipped with a 318 2bbl. engine which was 'skipping' and running rough at idle and low RPMs. The problem had been experienced since the purchase of the car. Roxbury Garage removed the carburetor and a hole was discovered in the lower section of the right hand side intake barrel of the manifold. This hole was allowing exhaust gas to continually enter the intake as if the EGR valve (which was in fact operating normally) was constantly open. The shop corrected the problem by tapping and installing a 1/4" plug.

The BRAKE SHOP in East Norwalk, Connecticut, has submitted photos documenting a problem they encountered with Dodge 300 series vans. When turning the steering to either extreme, the disc brake caliper hits the frame. This forces the piston back into the caliper. Upon the first brake application after such a maneuver the brake pedal goes to the floor. Subsequent pumping will return the brakes to normal.

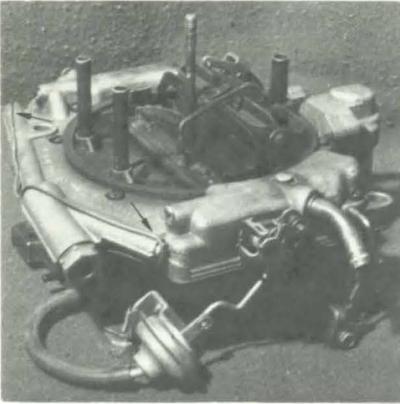
Dodge is evidently aware of the problem as they issued a service bulletin and changed the steering/jounce bumpers on the 1977 model.

DEFECT INVESTIGATION CHECKLIST

- C9-01: Alleged steering gear attaching bolt failures on 1974–77 Ford vans and light trucks.
- C8-39: Alleged engine compartment fires on 1977 Porsche 911 vehicles.
- C8-33: Alleged Stalling of 1977 Oldsmobile, Buick and Pontiac Vehicles Equipped with V-6 Engines.
- C8-29: 1973–1975 Pinto, Mustang II and Bobcat Steering Coupling Flange.
- C8-28: Alleged Front Wheel Bearing Failures on 1973–1977 Fiat 128 and X-1/9 Vehicles.
- C8-27: Alleged Fuel Leakage Problem in 1975 and 1976 V-8 equipped Ford Granadas and Mercury Monarchs.
- C8-24: Alleged Failure of Certain 13 and 14 inch Chrome Trailer Wheels Manufactured by Broad Wheels Company.
- C8-20: Alleged Malfunction of Power Steering Control Valve in 1975–1977 Ford Granadas and Mercury Monarchs.
- C8-04: Alleged Sticking of Idler Arm Bushing in 1968 to 1974 Fords, Lincolns and Mercurys, Full-Size and Intermediate.
- C8-02: Alleged Jumping Into Reverse from the "Park" Position of Certain 1970–78 Ford, Lincoln and Mercury Vehicles Equipped With C-6 or FMX Transmissions.

New bumper brackets (P 4039246(R) and 4039247(L)) are available for 1973–1977 1/2 models. The problem has also been cured by using the original heavy duty stop which is cast (P 40329789). The NHTSA is currently looking into this problem and a decision is expected soon.

CITY OF SAN JOSE POLICE PATROL FIRE



The City of San Jose has submitted to the PRP information and photos of a 1976 Dodge Monaco Police Patrol vehicle which had been destroyed by an engine compartment fire. The 440 cid engine, was equipped with a Carter Thermoquad four barrel carburetor in which an unsecured tapered plug had come out, allowing gasoline to flood over the engine. The vehicle was still parked with the engine running when the plug reportedly came out and started the fire.

The officer immediately left the vehicle, but the running engine caused more fuel to be continually pumped out, feeding the fire and ultimately destroying the vehicle.

The San Jose maintenance department is now installing safety wires to secure these plugs in place, as shown in the photo. The PRP would be interested in any information concerning similar experiences from other program members.

ASPEN-VOLARE CASTER/ CAMBER PROBLEMS

Recently, 1976-1978 Volare and Aspen models were recalled by the manufacturer to install support brackets to reinforce the front suspension pivot bar attachments.

These brackets partially cover the holes in the pivot bar plate used when adjusting the front end caster/camber, making adjustments with conventional tools difficult. The manufacturer has developed a special tool which will overcome this problem in adjusting caster/camber.

However, the PRP has received information involving difficulty in front-end alignment on these vehicles. Even with vehicles in which these special support brackets have not been installed, shops have experienced difficulty. Reportedly, there is lack of sufficient range for adjustment on the upper control arms to allow for proper caster/camber settings. Dick Thompson of STOP & GO in Portland, Oregon has seen this problem on several vehicles as did ROBERTS AUTO REPAIR in Chicago, IL. If you have experienced front-end alignment problems on Volares or Aspens, please let us know what you found.



OUTSTANDING PARTICIPANTS

The members highlighted below have contributed parts or information to the PRP within the past two months. Asterisks indicate first contributions for the year (July, 1978 through June, 1979). Numbers in parenthesis indicate consecutive active months.



NOVEMBER

REGION 0

- * ABBOTT'S GARAGE
S. Norwalk, CT
- * THE BRAKE SHOP, INC.
E. Norwalk, CT
- * ROXBURY GARAGE
Roxbury, CT
- (2) LINCOLN TECHNICAL INSTITUTE
Union, NJ
- * HENNIKER AUTOMOTIVE
Henniker, NH

REGION 1

- * BELMONT'S GARAGE
Langhorne, PA
- * A. RUTH'S GARAGE
Albany, NY
- (3) KOLESNIK'S SERVICE STATION
Rochester, NY
- * GOTHAM AUTO LEASE, INC.
New Rochelle, NY

REGION 2

- (2) AUTO BRAKE CORP.
Norfolk, VA
- * SUPERIOR WHEEL ALIGNMENT
& BRAKE SERVICE
Charlotte, NC

REGION 3

- (2) WALES GARAGE
Ft. Lauderdale, FL

REGION 5

- * CENTRAL PARK SERVICE
Kenosha, WI

REGION 6

- * AUTO HOSPITAL
Lincoln, NE
- * FLAIR AUTO
Chicago, IL

REGION 7

- * B & N AXLE SERVICE
Austin, TX
- * ROPE GARAGE
Cibolo, TX

REGION 9

- * KING CO. BRAKE SERVICE
Seattle, WA

REGION 9A

- * CITY OF SAN JOSE DEPT. OF
PUBLIC WORKS
San Jose, CA
- * ISE AUTOMOTIVE
Hollywood, CA
- * DANA MEYER FOREIGN CAR
SERVICE
Albany, CA
- * AUTOMOTIVE CITY SERVICE
CENTER
San Francisco, CA
- (2) RICHARD'S AUTOMOTIVE
Los Angeles, CA

DECEMBER

REGION 0

- * CORNWALL BRIDGE TEXACO
Cornwall Bridge, CT
- (2) ROXBURY GARAGE
Roxbury, CT

REGION 1

- * VIN'S MOTOR SERVICE
Brooklyn, NY
- * JONES SERVICE
Delmar, NY

REGION 2

- B. W. RILEY ALIGNMENT & BRAKE
Springfield, VA
- * MUSTEN AUTO SERVICE
Winston-Salem, NC
- (3) AUTO BRAKE CORP.
Norfolk, VA

REGION 3

- (3) WALES GARAGE
Ft. Lauderdale, FL

REGION 4

- * FISHER'S BRAKE SERVICE
Muncie, IN
- * CHESTER'S BODY & REPAIR
Cleveland, OH
- LEXINGTON BRAKE
Lexington, KY

REGION 6

- TIM'S IMPORT
Hutchinson, KS
- * AMERICAN HOSPITAL SUPPLY
Scientific Products Division
McGaw Park, IL

REGION 7

- * FOX AUTOMOTIVE
Tulsa, OK

REGION 8

- * D & N AUTO SERVICE
Phoenix, AZ
- DUNCAN'S AUTO
Phoenix, AZ
- * RAY'S AUTO CLINIC
Orem, UT

REGION 9

- L.A.D. AUTO ELECTRIC
Spokane, WA
- WAYNE'S GARAGE
Eugene, OR