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news

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

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RECALLS, INVESTIGATIONS AND DEFECT DETERMINATIONS

The NHTSA has recently announced an investigation into VW master cylinders, an initial defect determination involving fuel tanks in Ford Mavericks and Comets and a recall campaign of Chevrolet Monzas, Pontiac Sunbirds and Oldsmobile Starfires voluntarily undertaken by General Motors for engine mount problems in certain of their 151 CID equipped vehicles.

VW MASTER CYLINDERS

Master cylinders in 1975-76 VW Rabbits and Sciroccos and 1974-76 Audi Foxes and VW Dashers are currently being investigated by the NHTSA. The NHTSA is looking into the possibility that a faulty seal in the master cylinders is causing a reduction in stopping ability. Thus far, the NHTSA has received 30 owner complaints, including two reported accidents and one injury. Further information on this potential problem, as discussed in the PRP News, November-December, 1978, would be most helpful. Please forward any problem master cylinder without first disassembling it.

FORD FUEL TANK

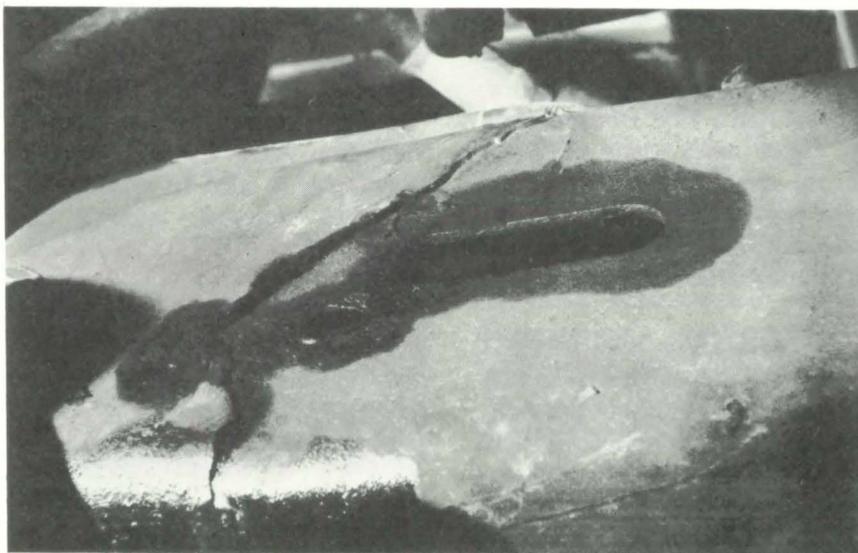
An initial defect determination has been announced by the NHTSA regarding fuel tanks in 1970-1973 Ford Mavericks and 1971-1973 Mercury Comets. The fuel tanks of these vehicles are, according to the NHTSA, subject to failure, rupture

and dislodgement which can result in fuel leakage, fires, injuries, deaths and property damage. The NHTSA has received reports of at least 26 rear impact collisions with fuel spillage and fires, resulting in at least 31 fatalities and 19 injuries to vehicle occupants.

GM ENGINE MOUNTS

General Motors is voluntarily recalling 172,000 of its 1977 and 1978 Chevrolet Monza, Pontiac Sunbird and Oldsmobile Starfire

vehicles equipped with the L-4, 151 CID engine. The design of the front suspension of these cars can allow the engine mount bracket to become deformed if the suspension bottoms out. Due to this deformation, the bracket will make contact with the steering linkage which, in time, can result in difficulty returning the steering wheel to a straight ahead position after a sharp turn is made. The NHTSA has had no reports of accidents or injuries, in connection with this problem.



The above photo shows a 1977 Dodge B300 Van with 52,000 miles experiencing cracking of the frame. The information and photo was submitted by the **City of Phoenix** in Phoenix, Arizona. The problem started as a small crack where the steering gear box is attached by

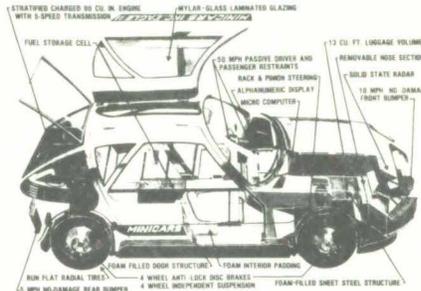
bolts and welding to the frame. As seen in the photo the crack has grown considerably. This fleet has also had several 1978 models with 12-15,000 miles experience similar cracking. Reports of a similar problem were noted in the PRP News of February-March, 1979.

A FUTURE FOR SAFETY

The NHTSA, with the help of Minicars, Inc., of Goleta, California, has designed a prototype research safety vehicle that will provide protection in 45 to 50 miles per hour frontal crashes without serious injury to the driver and front passenger, eliminate 75% of the serious injuries and fatalities from side impact crashes and significantly reduce the impact forces on a pedestrian. The four passenger car is also fuel efficient, has low exhaust emissions and is easy and inexpensive to repair.

Some future safety-related additions to the vehicle include an anti-skid braking system that would reduce stopping distances, an electronic display built into the dash

panel that would enable the driver to monitor operating systems in the vehicle, and a radar braking system which would signal if the driver is following the vehicle in front too closely and would automatically activate the braking system if a high speed crash is unavoidable.



RUST REPORTS

Rusted out rocker panels may soon be covered under a warranty as reported in the April 1979 issue of the PRP News. Since that time the PRP has received numerous reports of corrosion problems in various domestic vehicles by PRP members.

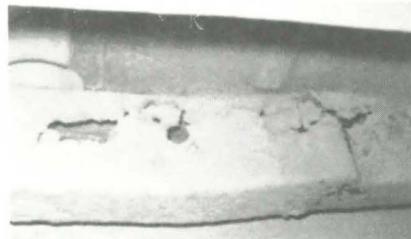
Eagle Transmission in Elmira, N.Y. reported a 1973 Dodge Polara with 72,000 miles where the main front supports on both sides of the vehicle rusted out. The rust was discovered when the vehicle was on a lift during a transmission inspection.

Katon's Garage in Spearfish, SD reported that they have seen several GMC vehicles with serious or severe rust problems. The shop has seen as much as 20-30% of various vehicles rusted out including components such as door panels body, and rocker panels.

John's Body Shop in Binghamton, NY reported seven vehicles from various domestic manufacturers all experiencing severe rust

problems primarily in the vehicle's undercarriage and frame.

The information, supported with photographs, clearly shows the problem. The vehicles involved were one 1971 International truck, two 1972 Mercurys, a 1968 and 1975 Chevrolet, a 1970 Duster and a 1968 Pontiac: Pictured is the rusted frame from one of the 1972 Mercury vehicles.



TELEPHONE CALLS

If you need mailbags, tags or info report forms, give us a **COLLECT CALL (703) 527-4500**.

DEFECTS INVESTIGATION CHECKLIST

- C9-11. Alleged fuel tank failure 1970-73 Ford Mavericks and 1971-73 Mercury Comets.
- C9-10. Alleged Brake Master Cylinder Failure on 1974-76 Volkswagen Rabbit, Dasher, Scirocco and Audi Fox.
- C9-02. Alleged Structural and Fuel Tank Corrosion in 1971-74 Ford Pantera Vehicles.
- C9-01. Alleged Steering Gear Attaching Bolt on 1974-77 Ford Vans and Light Trucks.
- 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.
- C8-27. Alleged Fuel Leakage Problem in 1975 and 1976 V-8 equipped Ford Granadas and Mercury Monarchs.
- C8-20. Alleged Malfunction of Power Steering Control Valve in 1975-1977 Ford Granadas and Mercury Monarchs.

THE PARTS RETURN PROGRAM NEWSLETTER

The Secretary of the U.S. Department of Transportation has determined that the publication of this periodical is necessary in the transaction of the public business required by law of this department. Use of funds for printing this periodical has been approved by the Director of the Office of Management and Budget through March 31, 1982.

THE FORUM

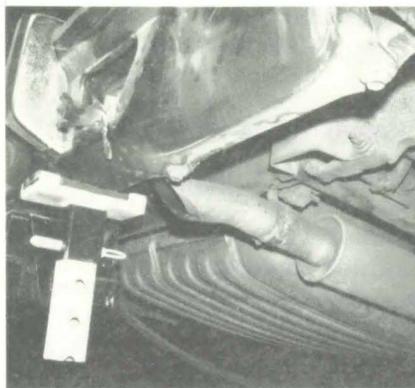
The State of Wisconsin's Department of Transportation reports a broken hose from a 1977 Plymouth Volare with approximately 58,000 miles. The fleet states that the outer rubber protective covering broke at the metal fitting, causing leaking and loss of front brakes on the vehicle.

In response to articles in the February-March 1979 and November-December 1978 issues of the PRP *News*, **Auto Brake Corp.**, in Norfolk, Va. reports similar occurrences of AMC electronic ignition problems. A dieseling engine (with the ignition off) could cause gases to enter the distributor and blow the cap off making restarting of the vehicle impossible. The shop also stated that an excessively rich mixture could cause backfiring.

Gil's Safety Service in Ridgewood, N.J. has seen many Volares and Aspens with brake problems similar to those described in the January 1979 issue of the PRP *News*. Gil's reports a 1977 Dodge Aspen with approximately 24,000 miles in which the brake piston froze in the caliper.

Also reported by Gil's were breakages of the pivot bar support plates in 1976-1978 Volares and Aspens. According to the shop, the pivot bar supports plates could break due to fatigue or failure when exposed to heavy stress. Chrysler recalled over one million 1976-78 Volares and Aspens in 1978 to correct this problem. If you are aware of similar breakage of pivot bar support plates in these vehicles, please try to determine if the owner received a recall notice, and whether the owner took the car in for correction and forward all information to the PRP.

As shown in the picture, the **Village of West Milwaukee, Wis.** reports a mis-aligned exhaust system tailpipe on a 1977 Plymouth Fury Coupe with 36,712 miles. The alignment allowed gases to accumulate on the inside of the rear bumper. Reportedly, the resulting heat was intense enough to melt the plastic back-up lamp lens and cage. In addition, Lt. Springer of West Milwaukee reports that the gasoline tank filler pipe is less than 12 inches from the melted lens, creating a potential fire hazard.



Ed Coffey of **ATS** in San Diego, has reported problems with the automatic transmission selector levers in late model Jaguars. The shop has seen several Jaguar XJ6's, model years 1974-78, equipped with Borg-Warner transmissions that have experienced the gear selector lever moving from park to reverse while the engine is running. Apparently the problem is with the selector lever that is mounted on the transmission housing. Through use, this lever elongates and becomes loose. Allegedly, this looseness can allow the transmission to shift, by itself, from park to reverse.

V & H Ford, Inc., of Marshfield, Wis., submitted information to the PRP concerning a new style wheel used on 1978-1979 Ford 9000 trucks. This new style wheel, part number D7HZ1109C, replaces the old style part number C97ZH09K and according to this dealership is lighter and less durable. These wheels are used primarily on trucks for off road use and allegedly can't withstand the stress as they are reportedly breaking at the flange.

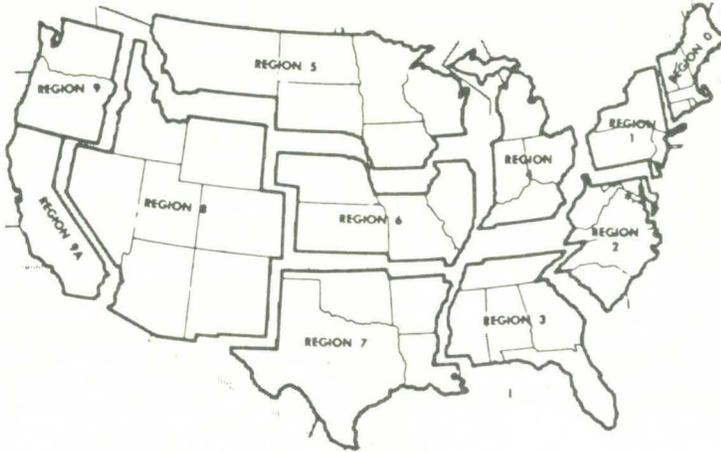
The State of Georgia, Georgia State Motor Pool, submitted information on a 1978 Nova with 78,000 miles. The Nova is equipped with a 250 cu. in. 6 cylinder engine and power brakes. The vacuum line from the intake manifold to the power booster became clogged with carbon causing a loss of power assist to the brakes. The fleet has also seen similar problems in 2 or 3 other vehicles.

Congratulations to **Midway Chevrolet**, St. Paul, Minn., and **Carol Buick**, Evanston, Ill., on receiving the Time Magazine Quality Dealer Awards for 1979. Both PRP members were honored for exceptional performance in their dealerships combined with distinguished community service. A tip of the PRP hat to Midway Chevrolet and Carol Buick.

Thanks to **Scotty's Auto Repair**, King of Prussia, Pa. and **Anderson & Buckner**, Arlington, Va. for assisting an NHTSA safety defects engineer in his inspection of Volkswagen accelerator cables.

OUTSTANDING PARTICIPANTS

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



REGION 6

- * **Casey's Sports Car Service**
Wichita, KS
- (2) **Raymond's Auto Repair**
Chicago, IL
- Tim's Import Sales & Service**
Hutchinson, KS
- * **Cecil's 66**
Kansas City, MO

REGION 7

- * **Tommy's Automotive**
San Angelo, TX
- (3) **Fox Automotive**
Tulsa, OK
- B & N Axle Service**
Austin, TX

REGION 8

- (2) **Las Vegas Wheel Alignment & Brake Service**
Las Vegas, NV
- Mr. Brake of Orem**
Orem, UT
- City of Phoenix**
Phoenix, AZ
- Duncan's Auto Repair**
Phoenix, AZ
- * **Foreign Car Specialists**
Albuquerque, NM

REGION 0

- * **Tucks Service Center, Inc.**
Hudson, MA
- (2) **Bothel's Garage**
Cape Elizabeth, ME
- D & Z Atlantic**
Cornwell Heights, PA
- * **Casey's Service Station**
Lynn, MA

REGION 1

- * **Crane Auto Repair**
Bricktown, NJ
- * **John's Body Shop**
Binghamton, NY
- * **Youngwood Exxon**
Youngwood, PA
- * **James Coulston, Inc.**
Norristown, PA
- * **Eagle Transmission, Inc.**
Elmira, NY

REGION 2

- * **Tyson's Auto Clinic**
Vienna, VA
- Auto Brake Corp.**
Norfolk, VA

REGION 3

- * **Spain Equipment Co.**
Boonville, MS
- (3) **Wales Garage**
Ft. Lauderdale, FL

REGION 5

- (2) **Day Nite Auto Station**
Kaukauna, WI

- * **German Auto Works**
St. Louis, MO
- Clemen's Auto Repair**
Racine, WI
- Katon's Garage**
Spearfish, SD

- V & H Ford, Inc.**
Marshfield, WI

- State of Wisconsin D.O.T.**
Madison, WI

REGION 9A

- A.T.S.**
San Diego, CA

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