



# parts return program

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

# news

DEPARTMENT OF  
TRANSPORTATION

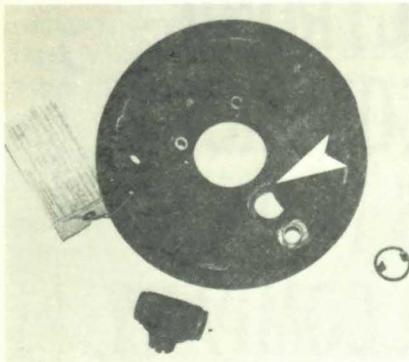
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NOVEMBER 1980

Vol. 6 No. 4

## CHEVROLET REAR BRAKE PROBLEMS REPORTED



**SALT LAKE CITY CORPORATION, FLEET MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT** of Salt Lake City, Utah, recently reported several failures encountered on the fleet's 1979 Chevrolet Malibu sedans' rear brakes.

The reported problem is centered around the brake backing plate, pictured above. On this vehicle the wheel cylinder fits through an irregularly shaped hole on the backing plate, which is designed to prevent the wheel cylinder from rotating. The wheel cylinder is held against the backing plate by a spring clip also pictured above, on the rear of the backing plate, as opposed to being held by bolts.

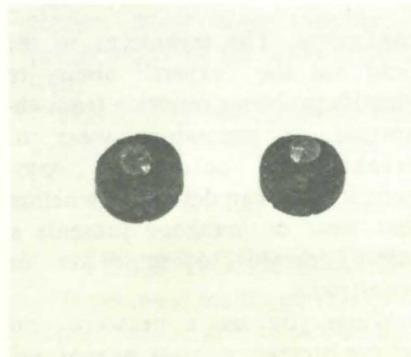
According to the shop, there is enough "free play" between the backing plate slot and the wheel cylinder body to allow slight rotational movement of the wheel cylinder as the brakes are applied. With use, the wheel cylinder rotates back and forth in the hole, enlarging it. Finally, there is enough wear so

that as the brakes are applied in a normal fashion, the wheel cylinder "cocks" and the wheel cylinder push rods wedge themselves against the brake shoe holding the brakes on. The wheel cylinder push rods are pictured below.

The shop also reports a theory that one of the push rods can drop out of the wheel cylinder and cause a complete loss of rear brakes. The failure seems to occur at around 40,000 miles and has been noticed on eight of their vehicles.

The fleet also reports a problem with premature wear of the ignition lock tumblers on these same vehicles. This problem causes the ignition switch to stick and presents difficulty in unlocking the steering column and starting the car as well as shutting the vehicle off and re-locking the column.

The PRP would like to hear from other members who have seen or repaired similar problems. Send your parts or information reports in today!



## VOLKSWAGEN FUEL SYSTEM PROBLEMS

The NHTSA is currently looking into reports of several fuel system pressure problems on 1980 Volkswagen Rabbit vehicles and possibly other late model Volkswagen vehicles.

The problem allegedly involves excessive pressure build up in the fuel tank. Several types of problems have been reported including fuel gushing out of the filler neck when the filler cap is removed, fuel leaks from various locations in the fuel system and tank, and vapor lock stalling.

The NHTSA is primarily concerned with the fire and accident hazards surrounding leaking fuel as well as the distinct possibility of fuel gushing out on someone removing the filler cap. In this instance, the potential for chemical burns and other skin irritation as well as the fire hazard, is cause for concern.

In 1979 Volvo recalled certain 1975-1977 model vehicles for correction of the same condition in their vehicles. In that case, a series of fixes ranging from installation of a pressure relief valve, replacement of the fuel tank, and the installation of an in-tank fuel pump were performed.

To date, 11 instances involving VW's have been reported to the NHTSA, dealing primarily with fuel leaks and gushing out of fuel. The agency is interested in receiving as many additional reports of related incidents as possible. Send your reports to the PRP, or give us a call, collect, (703) 558-3808.

## DEFECTS INVESTIGATION CHECKLIST

The NHTSA recently released its quarterly report of Defect Investigations status for the period April-July 1980. The most recent defects investigations, identified by case number are listed below:

- C80-10—Alleged tailgate window breakage, 1979 General Motors intermediate station wagons: Chevrolet Malibu, Buick Century, Pontiac Safari, Oldsmobile Cutlass.
- C80-05—Alleged engine stalling. 1980 Chevrolet Citation, Oldsmobile Omega, Buick Skylark, Pontiac Phoenix equipped with L-4 engines.
- C80-04—Alleged uncontrollable acceleration. 1977-80 Volkswagen Rabbit and 1979-80 Dasher equipped with diesel engines.
- C80-03—Alleged gear shift lever failure 1976-80 Chevrolet Chevette equipped with manual transmission.
- C9-24—Alleged cooling fan failure 1973 Chrysler, Dodge and Plymouth passenger cars with 318 CID engines.



As reported in last month's *PRP News*, the NHTSA is interested in gathering information on failed electronic ignition control modules manufactured by Ford Motor Company.

The agency is interested in gathering more information on both the Duraspark I and Duraspark II control modules. If you encounter a failed module requiring replacement, send the old unit in to the PRP. We are interested in seeing as many of these components as you can send.

## HAPPY "NEW YEAR"

The PRP recently began a "new year" of operations. Now is a good time to look at the function of the PRP and make plans for a successful year.

The PRP relies on the voluntary support and cooperation of independent repair shops throughout the nation to identify possible safety related problems and trends in motor vehicles and motor vehicle

equipment. The technician in the field has the "expert" ability to identify problems resulting from abnormal or premature wear or breakage of automotive components, and can determine whether that wear or breakage presents a safety hazard to motorists or pedestrians.

When you see a problem you believe presents a safety hazard, we

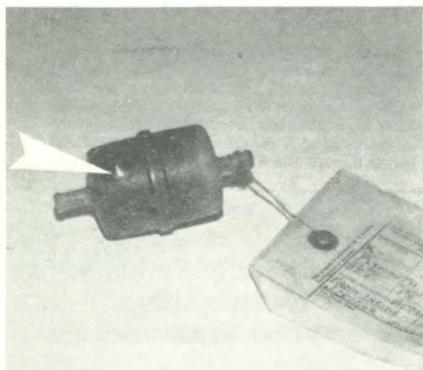
want to hear about it. If you can't send us the actual part for analysis, take the time to write down the pertinent information on the Information Report Form and forward it to the PRP. If you need mailbags, tags, information report forms, give us a call collect at (703) 558-3700.

Let's make this "new year" a successful one!

## THE FORUM

The **COUNTY OF HENRICO, VA** near Richmond submitted the fuel filter pictured below, removed from a 1978 Plymouth Volare with 18,000 miles.

As can be seen, the plastic filter case has become discolored and distorted around the area where a pinhole exists (arrow). It is possible that the combination of heat from the exhaust manifold fuel pressure acting on the inside wall of the fuel filter contributed to the failure. When the filter failed, raw fuel was spilled onto the hot intake manifold and cylinder head. Fortunately, the leak did not result in fire.



In a similar incident, a fuel hose removed from a 1978 Chevrolet Chevette was submitted to the PRP by **EDDIE'S MOBIL SERVICE** of University City, MO. The hose exhibits signs of rotting and is cracked and split along its entire length. This part was removed from the vehicle at 12,000 miles.

The **WASHINGTON GARAGE** of Bergenfield, NJ reports a problem they have encountered with the fuel lines supplied with in-line AC fuel filters. According to the shop, they have noticed, with some frequency, the failure of the fuel hoses connecting the line to the filter at about 8 months or 8,000 miles after installation. The shop reportedly is aware of several fires resulting from this failure.

**RAYMOND AUTO REPAIR** of Chicago, IL called in a report of a steering problem encountered on a 1978 Ford F-350 pickup with 16,000 miles. According to the shop, the truck driver had brought the vehicle in complaining of wandering and hard steering. Upon inspection, the shop mechanic noticed that the flexible steering coupler was being "pulled" by the steering column toward the firewall. This problem apparently resulted in excessive wear of the coupling, in turn causing the hard steering and road wander.

Upon further inspection, the shop mechanic noticed that the entire steering column was positioned at the upper-most limit of its adjustment, which appeared to be causing strain on the steering coupler. There was no evidence of accident damage or prior work on the steering column.

Another problem in Bendix Hydro Boost was reported this month by **BULLDOG BRAKE & ALIGNMENT** of Pomona, NY. The shop reports that the high pressure hose from the Hydro Boost pump to the power steering gearbox failed to hold pressure in the area where the steel tubing is crimped to the flexible hose at the pump end. The resulting leak deteriorated the steering assist requiring above normal effort to steer the vehicle. The Hydro Boost unit supplies the power assist for the brake system as well.

The subject vehicle of the report was a 1977 Lincoln Versailles with 87,000 miles.

### TELEPHONE CALLS

If you need mailbags, tags or info report forms, give us a **COLLECT CALL** (703) 558-3700.

**PERFORMANCE CAR CENTER** of Rockville, MD, reported a problem they have seen with many late model Triumph TR-7 suspension control arms. They report seeing the lower control arms bent on new or low mileage vehicles. The shop personnel think that the problem is caused by the vehicle being driven before the suspension blocks are removed. The front suspension is blocked, to render it inoperable, for transportation by ship.

The shop personnel are concerned that severe bends caused in this manner can lead to dynamic alignment problems and, possible, breakage of the lower control arm in severe cases.

**SOUTHLAND OIL CO.** in Yazoo, MS reported an incident of distributor failure on one of the fleet's 1980 Ford trucks. The failure involves the breakage of the roll pin holding the distributor drive gear in place on the lower distributor shaft. In this incident, the pin broke while the truck was traveling on an interstate highway, causing the vehicle to stall suddenly. The vehicle involved in this case was a 1980 F-600 with approximately 26,000 miles.

A report of automatic transmission failures involving a 1980 Oldsmobile Delta 88 Royale was submitted to the PRP by **GARLICK'S GARAGE** of Roanoke, VA. According to the shop the transmission failed suddenly on two occasions within the first 4,500 miles. The first failure occurred at 2,800 miles. The exact cause of the failure was not known. The transmission was replaced by the manufacturer.

## SEPTEMBER PARTICIPANTS

The members highlighted below have contributed parts or information to the PRP within the month of September. Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of months a shop has been active in the current year.

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| (14) <b>ISE AUTOMOTIVE</b><br>Hollywood, CA 90027             | (2) <b>GARLICK'S GARAGE</b><br>Roanoke, VA 24017                                    | (1) <b>R &amp; R AUTO</b><br>Clairton, PA 15025             |
| (14) <b>WALE'S GARAGE</b><br>Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33318         | (2) <b>PERFORMANCE CAR CENTER</b><br>Rockville, MD 20850                            | (1) <b>SALT LAKE CITY CORP.</b><br>Salt Lake City, UT 84101 |
| (9) <b>LAD AUTO ELECTRIC</b><br>Spokane, WA 99206             | (1) <b>BULLDOG BRAKE &amp; ALIGNMENT</b><br>Pomona, NY 10970                        | (1) <b>SOUTHLAND OIL</b><br>Yazoo City, MS 39194            |
| (8) <b>EDDIE'S MOBIL SERVICE</b><br>University City, MO 63130 | (1) <b>STATE OF FLORIDA, DEPT.<br/>OF GENERAL SERVICES</b><br>Tallahassee, FL 32304 | (1) <b>SOUTHWESTERN LABORATORIES</b><br>Houston, TX 77009   |
| (8) <b>SHEFFIELD AUTO ELECTRIC</b><br>Sheffield, MA 01230     | (1) <b>COUNTY OF HENRICO, VA</b><br>Richmond, VA 23273                              | (1) <b>TOTAL AUTO OF KISSIMMEE</b><br>Kissimmee, FL 32741   |
| (5) <b>BOTHEL'S GARAGE</b><br>Cape Elizabeth, ME 04104        | (1) <b>HOWARD'S AUTOMOTIVE</b><br>Seattle, WA 98155                                 | (1) <b>VAN NESS GULF</b><br>Washington, D.C. 20008          |
| (3) <b>CHERRYDALE MOTORS</b><br>Arlington, VA 22207           | (1) <b>JOE'S AUTO SERVICE</b><br>Albuquerque, NM 87110                              |   |
| (3) <b>CURLEY'S AUTO REPAIR</b><br>Warwick, RI 02888          | (1) <b>MIKE'S FOREIGN CAR<br/>REPAIR SHOP</b><br>Norristown, PA 19401               |   |
| (3) <b>DALE'S ALIGNMENT SERVICE</b><br>Brookings, SD 57006    | (1) <b>PRIME AUTO REPAIR</b><br>Brooklyn, NY 11223                                  |   |
| (3) <b>HENNIKER AUTOMOTIVE</b><br>Henniker, NH 03242          | (1) <b>RALPH CANNON AUTO<br/>SERVICE</b><br>Atlanta, GA 30313                       |   |
| (3) <b>RAYMOND'S AUTO REPAIR</b><br>Chicago, IL 60609         |   |   |
| (2) <b>ARNOLD'S AUTO SERVICE</b><br>Trenton, NJ 08610         |   |   |

### 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.

U.S. Department  
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