

Firestone

America's Tire Since 1900

January 2, 2001

017-001 (01)

Mr. Kenneth Weinstein
Associate Administrator for Safety Assurance
(NSA-01)
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
400 Seventh St., S.W.
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Mr. Weinstein:

This report is submitted by Bridgestone/Firestone, Inc. ("Firestone") pursuant to Title 49 Part 573 of the Code of Federal Regulations for the purpose of advising the Agency that Firestone will conduct a voluntary safety recall concerning a limited number of steel-belted radial tires manufactured at Cuernavaca, Mexico.

The recall includes the P265/70R16 Wilderness LE (both black sidewall and raised white letter tires) produced in DOT year 2000, week seventeen at the Cuernavaca, Mexico plant. The recalled tire serials are V672WL11700 (blackwall) and V672WL21700 (raised white letters). It is estimated that approximately 150 tires (or less than 2%) of the 8000 tires in size P265/70R16 Wilderness LE tires produced during the seventeenth week at Cuernavaca, Mexico may contain the defect.

The tire failure condition leading to the voluntary recall is tread belt separation. Tread belt separation may be evidenced by irregular wear, noise, or vibration. With continued operation, it may lead to complete separation of the tread/belt package from the tire carcass. However, the company is not aware of any claims for property damage or injury caused by the recalled tires.

As a result of analyzing a number of tires that had been returned after adjustment, it was discovered that there was a lack of adhesion between the wire and skim compound in the number 1 steel belt on three tires. On December 19, 2000 an investigation was begun which centered on the manufacturing plant at Cuernavaca, Mexico to determine the cause and extent of the observed condition. On December 22, 2000 after examination of production records and the analysis of tires from the affected time period

which remained in inventory, a determination was made that the lower adhesion in the belt area was the result of the unintentional inclusion of a small portion of non-specified rubber material in the number 1 stabilizer belt (the steel belt closest to the tire carcass) and that these tires would be recalled. Further examination has confirmed that the misproduction was limited to tires produced on April 24, 2000, but that the entire serial week would be recalled.

The recalled P265/70R16 Wilderness LE tires are original equipment on model year 2000 Yukon XL 1500 Series vehicles and were also offered as optional equipment on the Chevrolet Suburban 1500 Series. The tires may have been fitted on approximately 1500 vehicles that were manufactured at the General Motors assembly plant in Silao, Mexico during the months of April and May 2000 and sold in the United States. Replacement tires are immediately available and the remedy program will involve the replacement of tires at no cost to the customer at either their local GM or Chevrolet dealer or by their local authorized participating Firestone retailer.

A proposed owner notification letter will be presented to the Office of Defects Investigation and the mailings of this notification will be completed by January 23, 2001.

In a related safety action, Firestone will be conducting a campaign in Mexico to capture approximately 500 of the recalled P265/70R16 Wilderness LE tires, which may have been released to the Mexican replacement tire market. While there is no evidence that any tires exhibiting the deficiency are in the Mexican market, Firestone is instituting an action to retrieve all P265/70R16 tires with the same DOT numbers as those recalled in the United States in the interest of safety. None of these tires in the Mexican market is linked to any personal injury or property damage claims, nor has the company received reports of any related warranty adjustments.

Sincerely,



R. J. Wyant
Division Vice President
Corporate Quality Assurance

CC: Mr. Jonathan White
Division Chief Recall Analysis Division
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
400 Seventh St., S.W.
Washington, DC 20590