



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**National Highway
Traffic Safety
Administration**

400 Seventh St., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590

SEP 18 2006

CERTIFIED MAIL
RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED

Ms. Gay Kent, Director
Product Investigations
General Motors Corporation
Mail Code 480-111-E18
30200 Mound Road
Warren, MI 48090-9010
Dear Ms. Kent:

EA05-017
NVS-214pk

As you are aware, the Office of Defects Investigation (ODI) of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) is conducting an investigation concerning steering knuckle failures on model years 2003 to 2006 Hummer H2 vehicles manufactured by General Motors. To assist us in our investigation, ODI is requesting an update of information to supplement GM's March 31, 2006 response.

Unless otherwise stated in the text, the following definitions apply to these information requests:

- **Subject Vehicles:** Model Years 2003 through 2006 Hummer H2 vehicles.
- **GM:** GM, all of its past and present officers and employees, whether assigned to its principal offices or any of its field or other locations, including all of its divisions, subsidiaries (whether or not incorporated) and affiliated enterprises and all of their headquarters, regional, zone and other offices and their employees, and all agents, contractors, consultants, attorneys and law firms and other persons engaged directly or indirectly (e.g., employee of a consultant) by or under the control of GM (including all business units and persons previously referred to), who are or, in or after 1993, were involved in any way with any of the following related to the subject condition in the subject vehicles:
 - (a) design, engineering, analysis, modification or production (e.g. quality control);
 - (b) testing, assessment or evaluation;
 - (c) consideration, or recognition of potential or actual defects, reporting, record-keeping and information management, (e.g., complaints, field reports, warranty information, part sales), analysis, claims, or lawsuits; or
 - (d) communication to, from or intended for zone representatives, fleets, dealers, or other field locations, including but not limited to people who have the capacity to obtain information from dealers.

- **Alleged Defect:** Steering knuckle crack and/or fracture (left or right side) at the lower ball joint stud hole on a subject vehicle, which occurs for any reason, including but not limited to, a ball joint failure, tire rod failure, and or idler arm
- **Wheel-off event:** Condition where the wheel, tire and spindle detaches from the vehicle caused by a failure of the steering knuckle.
- **Document:** "Document(s)" is used in the broadest sense of the word and shall mean all original written, printed, typed, recorded, or graphic matter whatsoever, however produced or reproduced, of every kind, nature, and description, and all nonidentical copies of both sides thereof, including, but not limited to, papers, letters, memoranda, correspondence, communications, electronic mail (e-mail) messages (existing in hard copy and/or in electronic storage), faxes, mailgrams, telegrams, cables, telex messages, notes, annotations, working papers, drafts, minutes, records, audio and video recordings, data, databases, other information bases, summaries, charts, tables, graphics, other visual displays, photographs, statements, interviews, opinions, reports, newspaper articles, studies, analyses, evaluations, interpretations, contracts, agreements, jottings, agendas, bulletins, notices, announcements, instructions, blueprints, drawings, as-builts, changes, manuals, publications, work schedules, journals, statistical data, desk, portable and computer calendars, appointment books, diaries, travel reports, lists, tabulations, computer printouts, data processing program libraries, data processing inputs and outputs, microfilms, microfiches, statements for services, resolutions, financial statements, governmental records, business records, personnel records, work orders, pleadings, discovery in any form, affidavits, motions, responses to discovery, all transcripts, administrative filings and all mechanical, magnetic, photographic and electronic records or recordings of any kind, including any storage media associated with computers, including, but not limited to, information on hard drives, floppy disks, backup tapes, and zip drives, electronic communications, including but not limited to, the Internet and shall include any drafts or revisions pertaining to any of the foregoing, all other things similar to any of the foregoing, however denominated by GM, any other data compilations from which information can be obtained, translated if necessary, into a usable form and any other documents. For purposes of this request, any document, which contains any note, comment, addition, deletion, insertion, annotation, or otherwise comprises a nonidentical copy of another document shall be treated as a separate document subject to production. In all cases where original and any non-identical copies are not available, "document(s)" also means any identical copies of the original and all non-identical copies thereof. Any document, record, graph, chart, film or photograph originally produced in color must be provided in color. Furnish all documents whether verified by the manufacturer or not. If a document is not in the English language, provide both the original document and an English translation of the document.

In order for my staff to evaluate the subject condition, certain information is required. Pursuant to 49 U.S.C. § 30166, please provide numbered responses to the following information requests. Please repeat the applicable request verbatim above each response. After GM's response to each request, identify the source of the information and indicate the last date the information was gathered. Insofar as GM has previously provided a document to ODI, GM may produce it again

or identify the document, the document submission to ODI in which it was included and the precise location in that submission where the document is located. When documents are produced, the documents shall be produced in an identified, organized manner that corresponds with the information request letter (including the subparts). When documents are produced and the documents would not, standing alone, be self-explanatory, the production of documents shall be supplemented and accompanied by explanation.

1. State the number and provide copies of all of the following information that relates or potentially relates to the subject condition in the subject vehicles. This should include all information in GM's possession or control or of which it is otherwise aware.
 - a. owner complaints;
 - b. repair shop claims;
 - c. field reports;
 - d. crash/injury incident reports;
 - e. subrogation claims;
 - f. lawsuits; and
 - g. third-party arbitration proceedings where GM is a party to the arbitration.

List and collate your response separately for each category ("a" through "g") by date the incident was filed with GM. Provide for each item in this response the incident date, model, model year, wheel size, engine, owner name, owner address, owner phone number, zone, dealer code, problem code, vehicle identification number, build date, vehicle in-service date, repair date, repair mileage, repair order number, part numbers of subject components replaced, property damage, injuries, and the current status of GM's response to the incident.

For "d," identify all crashes by date, location, and names of parties involved. For "f," identify all the lawsuits by caption, court, and docket number. Provide a separate analysis and description of each item "e" through "g" identifying the vehicle (by model year, build date, and VIN) and the vehicle owner (by name, address, and telephone number). Include all police reports that relate to the subject condition known to GM. Clearly describe the sequence of events leading up to any accident(s), the approximate vehicle speed, approximate vehicle mileage, and any personal injuries, vehicle damage, or property damage that may have occurred.

Provide all related material and information that relate to the subject condition even if GM has not verified it. Indicate if no information exists for any category.

2. State, by model and model year, a total count for all of the following categories of claims, collectively, that have been paid by GM to date that relate to, or may relate to, the subject condition for the subject vehicles: warranty claims; extended warranty claims; claims for good will services that were provided; field, zone, or similar adjustments and reimbursements; and warranty claims or repairs made in accordance with a procedure specified in a technical service bulletin or customer satisfaction campaign.

Separately, for each such claim, state the following information:

- a. GM's claim number;
- b. Vehicle owner or fleet name (and fleet contact person) and telephone number;
- c. VIN;
- d. Repair date;
- e. Vehicle mileage at time of repair;
- f. Repairing dealer's or facility's name, telephone number, city and state or ZIP code;
- g. Labor operation number;
- h. Problem code;
- i. Replacement part number(s) and description(s);
- j. Whether the vehicle was towed to the dealer for the repair (y/n);
- k. Secondary component damage (y/n) - Whether there were coincident repairs to secondary components that can be damaged when steering knuckle fracture occurs. For example, repairs to the following components at the same front wheel position as the subject component on or about the same date as the subject component repair (± 2 days): brake rotor, brake hose, axle (four-wheel drive), body damage, tie rod, etc. (state the specific criteria used by GM);
- l. Concern stated by customer;
- m. Comment, if any, by dealer/technician relating to claim and/or repair; and
- n. If good will or any other GM good faith payment was received to the owner in an accordance to fix the subject vehicle.

Provide this information in Microsoft Access 2000, or a compatible format, entitled "WARRANTY DATA." See Enclosure 1, Data Collection Disc, for a pre-formatted table which provides further details regarding this submission.

3. The following concerns Question No. 4 in GM's March 31, 2006 EA-IR response. Police Accident Reports and EAA claims indicate that CDR data was collected. However, ODI was unable to obtain this information for the following consumers. Therefore, please provide CDR information that responds to Question No. 4 of the agency's IR of January 4, 2006 for incidents involving the following consumers that were not submitted in GM's March 31, 2006 EA-IR response.
 - a. 10/Baker;
 - b. 12/Hayden;
 - c. 24/Butrymowitz;
 - d. 86/Border;
 - e. 89/Essary;
 - f. 90/Lane; and
 - g. 93/O'Leary.

4. Also for Question No. 4 from GM's EA-IR response, please explain what, if any, final resolution was reached for each the 101 cases reported by GM (e.g. warranty, good will, settlement, or other -- if "other" explain). Did GM pay for the repairs? If so, how much did it pay for each repair? State whether each repair was subject to a confidential agreement or settlement and state and describe the terms of the agreement or settlement. The information may be provided in an excel spreadsheet.

5. Please provide ODI with complete sets of Police Accident Report photographs for the following incidents that GM reported in its March 31, 2006 IR response:
 - a. 42/Roberts;
 - b. 76/Norris;
 - c. 81/Cignarale;
 - d. 89/Essray;
 - e. 96/Jones;
 - f. 97/Vogt; and
 - g. 30/Barksdale

Please provide with question "g" any additional buyback information where applicable.

6. Provide detailed records from Grede, Eagle-Pitcher, Delphi, and GM on all non-conforming knuckles for the 2003 MY Hummer H2. Non-conforming refers to parts not meeting required specifications. This would include, but not necessarily be limited to, items such as the following:
 - a) Financial charges to any supplier from any of the supplied parties for non-conformance;
 - b) Shipment records indicating return of non-conforming knuckles; and
 - c) Quality Tracking records such as Problem Reporting and Resolution (PRR) documents and/or problem Resolution Tracking System (PRTS) or similar mechanism or procedure by which the nature of the non-conformance is documented, analyzed and/or resolved.
7. Describe the procedure and criteria for checking the surface finish and taper on the lower ball joint stud holes machined in the steering knuckles on the subject vehicles. Provide hard copies of the Job Instruction and Job Element Sheet (JES).
8. Describe the previous two-pass machining operation, tool life, tool type, speed and feeds and surface finish produced for the lower ball joint stud hole on the subject vehicle steering knuckles. Compare and contrast to the new, one-pass operation. What are the tolerances on the specifications? What was the date of this changeover? Provide photographs of the process.
9. Please describe any testing and/or assessments that GM has conducted (either on its own or on its behalf), regarding the interaction between the amount of torque applied to the ball joint nut and the occurrence of brinnelling on the steering knuckle and provide copies of those tests and assessments

This letter is being sent to GM pursuant to 49 U.S.C. § 30166, which authorizes NHTSA to conduct any investigation that may be necessary to enforce Chapter 301 of Title 49. It constitutes a new request for information. GM's failure to respond promptly and fully to this letter could subject GM to civil penalties pursuant to 49 U.S.C. § 30165 or lead to an action for injunctive relief pursuant to 49 U.S.C. § 30163. (Other remedies and sanctions are available as

constitutes a new request for information. GM's failure to respond promptly and fully to this letter could subject GM to civil penalties pursuant to 49 U.S.C. § 30165 or lead to an action for injunctive relief pursuant to 49 U.S.C. § 30163. (Other remedies and sanctions are available as well.) Please note that maximum civil penalties under 49 U.S.C. § 30165 have increased as a result of the recent enactment of the Transportation Recall Enhancement, Accountability, and Documentation (TREAD) Act, Public Law No. 106-414 (signed November 1, 2000). Section 5(a) of the TREAD Act, codified at 49 U.S.C. § 30165(b), provides for civil penalties of up to \$6,000 per day, with a maximum of \$16,375,000 for a related series of violations, for failing or refusing to perform an act required under 49 U.S.C. § 30166. This includes failing to respond to ODI information requests.

If GM cannot respond to any specific request or subpart thereof, please state the reason why it is unable to do so. If on the basis of attorney-client, attorney work product, or other privilege, GM does not submit one or more requested documents or items of information in response to this information request, GM must provide a privilege log identifying each document or item withheld, and stating the date, subject or title, name and position of the person/s from, and the person/s to whom it was sent, and the name and position of any other recipient (to include all carbon copies or blind carbon copies), the nature of that information or material, and the basis for the claim of privilege and why that privilege applies.

GM's response to this letter, in duplicate, together with a copy of any confidentiality request for Question Nos. 1 and 2 of this IR letter, must be submitted to this office by **November 3, 2006**. Full response for Question Nos. 3 through 9 must be submitted to this office by September 29, 2006. Please include in GM's response the identification codes referenced on page one of this letter. If GM finds that it is unable to provide all of the information requested within the time allotted, GM must request an extension from Mr. Richard Boyd at (202) 366-4933 no later than five business days before the response due date. If GM is unable to provide all of the information requested by the original deadline, it must submit a partial response by the original deadline with whatever information GM then has available, even if GM has received an extension.

If GM claims that any of the information or documents provided in response to this information request constitute confidential commercial material within the meaning of 5 U.S.C. § 552(b)(4), or are protected from disclosure pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 1905, GM must submit supporting information together with the materials that are the subject of the confidentiality request, in accordance with 49 CFR Part 512, to the Office of Chief Counsel (NCC-30), National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Room 5219, 400 Seventh Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20590. GM is required to submit two copies of the documents containing allegedly confidential information (except only one copy of blueprints) and one copy of the documents from which information claimed to be confidential has been deleted.

If you have any technical questions concerning this matter, please call Mr. Peter Kivett of my staff at (202) 366-6178.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Richard Boyd". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Richard Boyd, Chief
Medium & Heavy Vehicle Division
Office of Defects investigations