



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

ODI RESUME

INVESTIGATION: PE01-005
 SUBJECT: Fire in the area of the rear auxiliary heater.
 PROMPTED BY: IE01-014 - William Duckwitz, Larry Long
 PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: S. B. York

DATE CLOSED: 11 MAY-01
 DATE OPENED: 06-MAR-01

MANUFACTURER: General Motors
 MODEL(S): Tahoe
 MODEL YEAR(S): 2001
 VEHICLE POPULATION: 339,796

PROBLEM DESCRIPTION: While driving, a fire started in the passenger's side rear compartment when the auxiliary heater was turned on.

FAILURE REPORT SUMMARY

	ODI	MANUFACTURER	TOTAL
COMPLAINTS:	1	0	1
FIRES:	1	0	1
#INJURIES:	0	0	0
#FATALS:	0	0	0
OTHER:	0	0	0

DESCRIPTION OF OTHER:

ACTION: This Preliminary Evaluation has been closed.

INVESTIGATOR: S B York

DIV CHF: Richard Boyd

OFC DIR: [Signature]

5/18/01
DATE

5/11/01
DATE

5/11/01
DATE

SUMMARY: See following page.

SUMMARY: This investigation was based on a single fire that occurred in a new vehicle the first time the owner drove it. The event happened on the first drive in less than 100 miles. The fire was serious in nature and totally consumed the interior of the vehicle in a matter of minutes. GM and ODI, working together, conducted a very exhaustive investigation of the burned vehicle and determined that the cause of the fire was most likely a shorted speed module for the rear compartment heater blower motor. The rear heater blower motor is located in the right side (passenger side) interior quarter panel, just in front of the right rear wheel well. The speed module is mounted adjacent to the rear heater blower motor and controls the speed at which the blower motor runs. A "speed module" controls current flow by pulse width modulation, rather than using high temperature resistance coils as earlier rheostat style blower motor switches. GM has sold almost 350,000 units of the subject vehicle and has received only the single fire report discussed above, nor has GM received any warranty claims for defective rear heater blower motor speed modules. Based on the knowledge of only a single failure, this appears to be an isolated incident. Due to the resultant low complaint rate, further use of agency resources at this time does not appear to be warranted. The closing of this investigation does not constitute a finding by NHTSA that no safety-related defect exists. The agency reserves the right to take further action on these models if warranted by the circumstances.