

U. S. House of Representatives
Washington, D. C. 20515

March 19, 2012

The Honorable David Strickland, Administrator
NHTSA Headquarters
1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E.
West Building
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Administrator Strickland,

We are writing to bring your attention to troubling reports that continue to surface concerning a vehicle safety risk many Jeep Wrangler owners refer to as the "Jeep Death Wobble."

In complaints circulated on the Internet, reported in the news, and filed with NHTSA's consumer complaint database, Jeep owners have described a powerful shaking of the steering wheel and front wheels after a driver hits road bumps at speed. The Jeep complaints span many models and years, with a preponderance associated with model year 2005-2010 Jeep Wranglers.

Despite the availability of Technical Service Bulletins (TSB) from the manufacturer to assist dealerships in diagnosing and repairing the problem, we understand that most Jeep owners have not been notified of the safety risk or the remedy.

To help us understand NHTSA's assessment of this issue, we request that you respond to the following questions:

- (1) How many consumer complaints has NHTSA received related to "death wobble," or underlying steering, suspension and powertrain problems in Jeep vehicles? Please provide a breakdown by model and model years.
- (2) Has NHTSA's review of Early Warning Reporting (EWR) data identified concerns regarding steering, suspension and powertrain problems in model year 2005-2010 Jeep vehicles? Please explain the review and the concerns identified.
- (3) Has NHTSA analyzed NASS and FARS data on rollovers or other crashes involving model year 2005-2010 Jeep vehicles to determine whether accidents, injuries and deaths may have been triggered by a sudden loss of vehicle control because of "death wobble" or underlying steering, suspension and powertrain problems? Please explain that analysis.

- (4) On NHTSA's website there are summaries of four Technical Service Bulletins (TSBs) issued by Chrysler Group LLC that recommend a repair for Jeep Wranglers to address steering and linkage problems. Please provide a complete copy of these four TSBs as well as any others that concern steering, suspension, powertrain or other problems in Jeep vehicles that are potentially related.
- (a) Does the agency agree that the repairs recommended in these TSBs can prevent Jeep Wrangler "death wobble?" If not, what repairs does NHSTA believe are needed?
 - (b) How does NHTSA ensure that TSBs are disseminated and used effectively?
 - (c) With many Jeep vehicles affected by "death wobble" no longer under warranty or soon subject to expiring warranties, how can NHTSA help ensure Jeep owners have access to necessary repairs?
 - (d) How does NHTSA determine which TSBs are published or summarized on NHTSA's website and how detailed such summaries should be?
 - (e) Does NHTSA require, or is it common practice for, manufacturers to maintain indexes of TSBs organized by category of model, model year and vehicle component? If so, why are such indexes not available on manufacturer or NHTSA websites so that consumers can identify TSBs on their vehicle?
- (5) We are aware of at least one draft consumer satisfaction notification issued by Chrysler LLC, Customer Satisfaction Notification J34, encouraging owners of certain model year 2007-2010 Jeep Wranglers with right hand steering to visit a local dealership to replace the steering damper and mounting bracket.
- (a) How does NHTSA determine whether a consumer service campaign or consumer notification is necessary, or whether one undertaken by a company is sufficient?
 - (b) There are few right hand steering vehicles in the United States.
 - (i) Is NHTSA aware of any customer satisfaction notifications and/or owner notification letters addressing steering problems in Jeep Wranglers with left hand steering or other Jeep models? If so, please provide them.
 - (ii) Is NHTSA aware of similar Jeep steering problems identified or addressed by safety authorities in countries where right hand steering is standard? Please explain.
 - (c) The notice indicates that repairs will be paid for or reimbursed by the manufacturer. How does NHTSA determine whether a manufacturer is

required to reimburse owners or pay for a repair? Please provide any guidance NHTSA offers to manufacturers.

- (d) How does NHTSA ensure notification and/or reimbursement is provided when manufacturer ownership changes, such as the transition of Jeep brand ownership from DaimlerChrysler Motors Company LLC to Chrysler LLC, to Chrysler Group LLC after the company emerged from bankruptcy in 2009. Please provide any guidance NHTSA offers to manufacturers.
- (6) Has NHTSA conducted an Issues Evaluation of “death wobble” in Jeep vehicles or any other review to determine whether to open an investigation? Please provide copies of any such evaluation. Does the agency believe a safety recall or consumer service campaign for affected Jeep models is warranted?

The Jeep “death wobble” is a serious safety issue that must be evaluated by NHTSA. It is also representative of the problems involving lack of transparency and access to reliable repairs that are present in other safety and defect cases. We look forward to your response to the questions we’ve raised and to working with you to better assist and protect impacted vehicle owners.

Please provide the information requested in writing no later than April 2, 2012. If you have any questions regarding this request, contact Blake Hulnick with Rep. Eshoo’s Office at (202) 225-8104 or Michelle Ash with the Energy and Commerce Committee Staff at (202)226-3400.

Sincerely,



Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress



Henry A. Waxman
Ranking Member, Energy and Commerce Committee