

From: DINGER, B.
Subject: Prime Time Thursday - Brake Shift Interlock Story
To: DLRALLS ALL DEALERS

05/03/01 15:01:06

This note is from * DINGER, BARBARA L

To All Dealer Principals:

In a continuing effort to provide our dealers with breaking news, I want to inform you about a story airing tonight on Prime Time Thursday at 10:00pm EDT. The story focuses on our older minivans and their lack of brake shift interlock (BSI). Our new minivans, RS models, do have BSI. This story focuses on older models but we do not want consumers to think this condition exists on our RS minivans.

We have provided ABC with the statement below in response to the story.

Our main messages are:

- RS minivan has brake shift interlock and our entire fleet of cars and trucks will have this feature by the 2002 model year, except Ram Van and Ram Wagon.
- Prime Time's piece is unfair because it doesn't point to areas where DaimlerChrysler has been the leader in safety features on minivan:
 - first with standard air bags
 - first with integrated child safety seats
 - first to meet car safety standards

Please read our position statement below. It gives more detail regarding brake shift interlock (BSI).

Gary Dilts
Senior Vice President - Sales

Contact: Dominick Infante 248-512-2317
Mike Aberlich 248-512-2704

DaimlerChrysler Statement in Response to ABC Prime Time
Thursday on Brake Shift Interlock

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) does not now, nor has it previously, required brake shift interlock systems on any vehicles. Brake shift interlock mechanisms were adopted by certain manufacturers to address

unintended acceleration/pedal misapplication allegations.

We strongly disagree, however, with Prime Time Thursday's premise that brake shift interlock systems are the appropriate deterrent for unattended child related accidents and--more importantly--so does NHTSA. Statistical data proves that the risk of accidents involving unattended children is no greater for minivans not equipped with brake shift interlock than those that are so equipped. Complaints to NHTSA on the subject, many driven by the urgings of trial lawyers through newspaper advertising and "headhunting" phone calls, are not representative of the safety of these vehicles.

Moreover, the allegation that cost was the determining factor in DaimlerChrysler's consideration of incorporating this device is baseless and false. That allegation has been leveled by Mr. Paul Sheridan, a former employee who has no engineering background and was fired by the company for mishandling company information. Following his termination, Mr. Sheridan filed a "whistle-blower" lawsuit against DaimlerChrysler that a judge later dismissed as having no merit.

As one federal judge put it in disqualifying Sheridan from testifying as an expert, "At no time was [Mr. Sheridan] ever employed in any technical design or analysis function for any features of any model of the Chrysler minivan."

The real issue here is not dollars and cents, it is why anyone would risk leaving a child unattended or unsupervised in a running vehicle. More than 40 states have laws making it unlawful to leave a running vehicle unattended. Only eight states have laws that make it illegal to leave a child under the age of six unattended in a vehicle. The facts dictate that the most effective deterrent in these types of tragedies is the vigilance of the parent or operator. To suggest otherwise is simply sending the wrong message.

- ### -