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**Theodor R Cunningham**  
Executive Vice President - Sales and Marketing  
General Manager - Minivan Operations

Dear

There has been recent and highly visible media coverage questioning the safety of liftgate latches on 1984 - 1994 Chrysler, Plymouth and Dodge minivans. This coverage is emotional in nature, and may have raised concern among some of the four million owners of Chrysler, Plymouth and Dodge minivans. Peace of mind among minivan owners is very important to Chrysler, so we are writing to explain our views and the actions we intend to take.

Chrysler Corporation firmly stands behind the quality and safety of our minivans, including the liftgate latches. There has been no formal determination that a safety defect exists with minivan latches. However, to help ensure peace of mind that your minivan is safe, Chrysler has decided to provide a stronger latch. We will replace your minivan's liftgate latch with a stronger component at no charge to you.

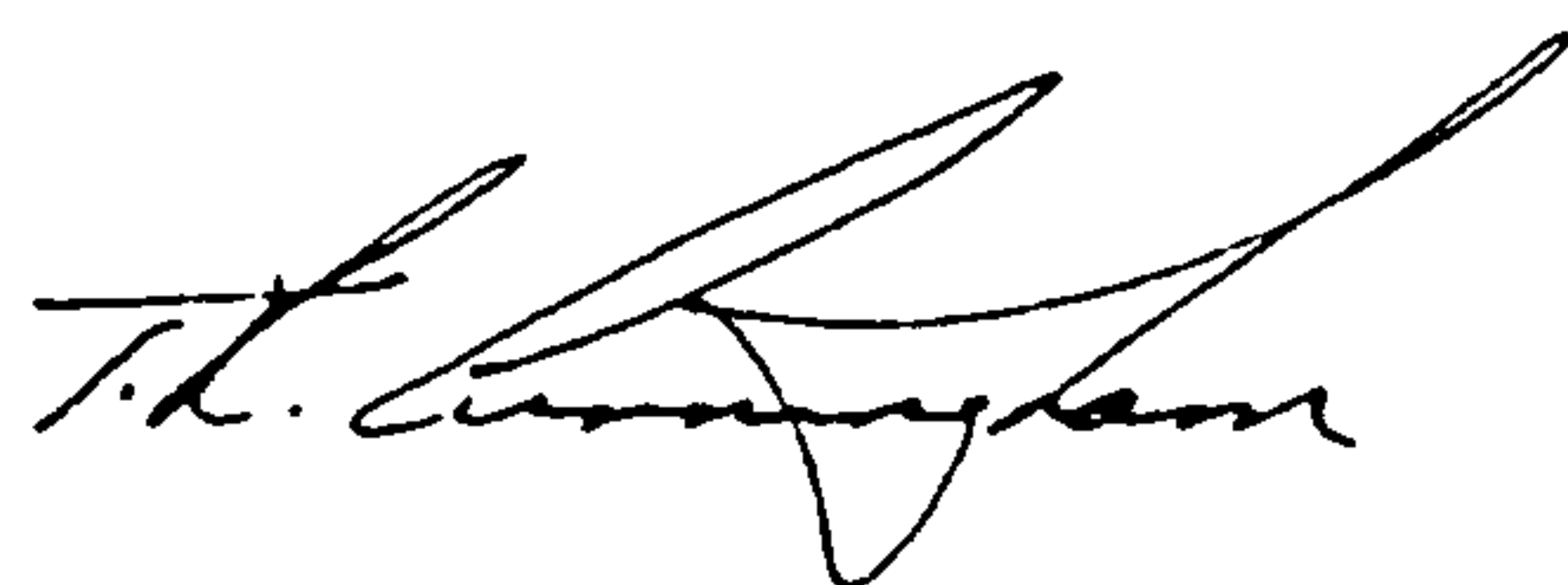
Because new latches must be tooled and fabricated to fit your minivan, it will take some time to have a supply of new latches available. During the next several months, we will notify you when the proper parts are on hand at dealerships to perform this service action. All you need do when you receive the notice is to telephone your dealer to schedule an appointment. Your dealer will schedule you for the earliest possible appointment as soon as parts availability permits. For more information regarding minivan liftgate latches and anticipated parts availability, please call us toll-free at 1-800-MINIVAN (646-4826).

We believe, and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) agrees, that the single most important safety action you can take is to ensure that all occupants are wearing seat belts properly at all times. And, of course, never allow anyone to occupy the cargo area. Also, please ensure that any removable seat has been securely reattached before the vehicle is driven.

NHTSA has been conducting an investigation of the latches on these vehicles. If you have any concerns regarding this service action, you may call the NHTSA Toll Free Safety Hotline at 1-800-424-9393.

Chrysler Corporation has a history of safety leadership. We take it very seriously. We at Chrysler Corporation want you to be safe--and certain.

Sincerely,



*Süddeutsche Zeitung*  
"Cars and Traffic"  
Saturday, July 25, 1998

The allegedly weak door latch on the Voyager leaves Chrysler with explaining to do

## **Replacing the part is "not relevant for us in Europe"**

Tailgate opens in side collisions/Controversial part was apparently only used in the U.S.

Embarrassed silence prevails at the German branch of Chrysler, the third largest U.S. auto manufacturer. The company is being pilloried because of possible safety defects in the European edition of its Voyager minivan. At least, that's how it looks to Ralph Hoar, safety consultant from Arlington, Virginia, who specializes in automotive engineering. He is trying to prove that Chrysler is treating European Voyager owners like second-class customers.

At least 37 deaths have resulted in the U.S. when Voyager tailgates opened on (side) impact during accidents. Passengers were ejected from the third row of seats in the minivan through the open tailgate. After these deaths, Chrysler installed new tailgate latches for its approximately 4.5 million Voyager customers in North America.

For the approximately 200,000 European customers who drive Voyagers which are '95 and earlier models, there has been no recall campaign from Chrysler up to this point. Safety-conscious Ralph Hoar supposes that they are driving around just like before with the old, less securely designed tailgate latch.

In order to confirm his suspicions, Hoar recently had the tailgate latch removed from a 1991 and a 1994 Voyager in Baden-Württemberg. This revealed that these latches were the old version of the component. Hoar had both latches sent to the U.S. as evidence. New latches were installed on both vehicles. One latch was sent from the U.S. and the other was a replacement part purchased for DM 118.47 at a German Chrysler dealership.

During the early stages of the latch exchange, Chrysler USA explained that there was a recall action in Europe and that "thousands of latches" had already been replaced. According to Chrysler Deutschland at first, however, "replacing the part is not relevant for us in Europe." Concerning the contradictory statements from Chrysler USA and Chrysler Deutschland, and the results of the latch exchange mentioned, Andrea Leitner, press representative for Chrysler Deutschland, simply said, "We have no comment on that."

AXEL WOLF

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## **SAFETY CONSULTANT OFFERS DM1,000 FOR COPY OF CHRYSLER'S EUROPEAN MINIVAN LATCH LETTER**

Auto safety consultant Ralph Hoar is offering 1,000 Deutschmarks for a copy of the minivan latch warning letter that Chrysler claims it sent to 200,000 European Chrysler minivan owners. Hoar has a safety consulting firm in Arlington, Virginia. He has been a long-time critic of Chrysler's minivan rear liftgate latches, and of Chrysler's efforts to minimize the hazards associated with the defective latches.

Last month, Hoar announced that Chrysler had "failed to tell European van owners of the faulty latches" and had "not offered to replace defective latches on the rear doors of minivans it sold overseas as it has in the U.S."

Chrysler immediately issued a statement saying, "Nothing could be further from the truth." Chrysler claimed that it "did notify distributors, and even notified customers directly in the two countries with the most minivan sales – Germany and France." The company claimed "we followed the same formula around the world." The company accused Hoar of "spreading false claims."

"Chrysler has distorted the truth about its defective minivan latches since the controversy began. It's unlikely to change now," Hoar said. "It will be interesting to see which attitude toward safety will prevail when Chrysler and Mercedes join forces. Chrysler could learn a few things from its new partner," Hoar added. He noted that Mercedes spent enormous sums of money to redesign, recall and change the entire suspension in its new "A" car when it proved prone to rollover. "We've urged Chrysler to stop treating its European customers like second class citizens. Chrysler should warn Europeans of the hazard that the latches pose and offer to replace latches on European vans at no charge – just as they've done in the U.S. and Canada – nothing more, nothing less," Hoar said.

Chrysler's statement last month claims they've already done so. "Chrysler has repeatedly refused our request and the requests of others for copies of the letters that they sent to European van owners. That's why we're offering DM1,000 to the first European Chrysler minivan owner

who provides us with a copy of a letter from Chrysler warning that the latch might fail and offering to replace the latch at no cost to the van owner. The letter must predate our July 10, 1998, announcement,” Hoar said.

German journalist Axel Wolf reported on July 25, 1998, in *Suddeutsche Zeitung* that in Germany “there has been no recall campaign from Chrysler up to this point.” Contrary to what Chrysler was saying in the U.S., a Chrysler Germany spokesperson told Wolf “replacing the part is not relevant for us in Europe.” Concerning the contradictory statements from Chrysler USA and Chrysler Germany, Andrea Leitner, press representative for Chrysler Germany, stated, “We have no comment on that.”

The letter can be sent via fax to 703-841-8390 or via mail to 1001 N. Highland St., Suite 300, Arlington, Virginia, 22201, U.S.A. For further information visit <http://www.safetyforum.com>