



Vehicle & Operator Services Agency

From: Information Access
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Our ref: **F0001416**

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Date: 20th August 2008

Dear

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000

I refer to your e-mail of 16th August 2008 concerning a judder problem with Fiat x250 Ducato Motorhomes and vans, in which you requested copies of report, correspondence, minutes of meetings and any other written or recorded information concerning this.

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 presumes the right of access to information held by public authorities unless an exemption to release is engaged. It does not however give the right to copies of documentation. I have therefore summarised the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency's (VOSA) involvement in the matter below.

VOSA, as the UK enforcement authority for product safety issues within the UK automotive sector initiates investigations into reports of safety defects that are alleged to be the result of deficiencies in design or construction.

This work is carried out under the terms of the Code of Practice on Vehicle Safety Defects, which describes a safety defect as a "feature of design or construction liable to cause a significant risk of personal injury or death". This may be better explained as an unexpected defect with catastrophic results.

Defects which can be identified by routine maintenance or servicing, or give adequate warning or are evidenced by unusual noises or marked changes in handling or performance are not considered "safety defects" and not normally taken forward.

In the cases of reports of judder when reversing the above motorhomes, VOSA do not consider the matter to be a "safety defect" (as a driver would be immediately aware, and therefore the issue is not unexpected) and consequently have not taken this matter forward under the terms of the Code.

However, having received eight reports, to be fully aware of the alleged problem and to respond to enquiries, VOSA engineers have conducted reversing tests on a Fiat motorhome, which had been rejected to a dealer for clutch judder. This was to establish if there was any unexpected risk.

In every case, using appropriate engine revs, no clutch judder was noted; rather the issue appears to be one of body vibration when reversing. This confirmed to VOSA that it's assessment of whether or not this is a safety issue was correct. Additionally, the manufacturer, being aware of this issue, has issued a service news bulletin to it's dealers which recommends that it is advisable when reversing to release the clutch gradually maintaining the engine speed above 1300rpm.

If you have any queries about the information you have received, please contact me, and I will be happy to assist you. My contact details are given at the head of this letter.

If you are unhappy with the information supplied, you may ask for an internal review. To request an internal review, please write to:

VOSA Corporate Office,
Berkeley House,
Croydon Street,
Bristol,
BS5 0DA

or email vosa.corporateoffice@vosa.gsi.gov.uk

giving the reasons for your dissatisfaction. It will help us if you quote the reference number for your case.

If you do not agree with the outcome of the internal review, you may lodge an appeal with the Information Commissioner (www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk). The Information Commissioner is an independent official appointed by the Crown to oversee the Data Protection Act 1998, the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

The Information Commissioner can consider complaints about any aspect of the way in which requests for information have been handled. Please note: the Information Commissioner would be unlikely to consider your complaint if you have not first requested an internal review.

You can write to the Information Commissioner at:

The Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House,
Water Lane,
Wilmslow,
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact us, quoting reference **F0001416**.

Yours sincerely

VOSA Information Access

An executive agency of the
Department for
Transport