

# Consumer advocacy group says Chrysler V-6 has sludge problems

By [Mary Connelly](#)

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The Center for Auto Safety is asking the Chrysler group to correct sludge problems and extend the warranty on 2.7-liter V-6 engines in 1998-2002 model year vehicles.

The Chrysler group is investigating "limited claims" received from customers, spokesman Sam Locricchio says.

The Center for Auto Safety, a consumer advocacy group in Washington, says it has received 92 complaints regarding oil sludge and engine failure on 1998 to 2002 Dodge Stratus and Intrepid as well as Chrysler Concorde and Sebring models.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has received more than 400 complaints of similar engine problems in those models, NHTSA says.

Many of the complaints blame sludge for the engine problems, an NHTSA spokesman says.

Engine sludge is a thick paste of Jell-O-like oil that clogs the oil passages inside the engine. The lack of lubrication damages the moving parts of the engine.

Affected engines typically fail during highway driving, the center says. Other consumers report failure of the engine timing chain, it says.

In a letter dated Thursday, Aug. 26, the center calls on Chrysler group CEO Dieter Zetsche to extend the engine warranty to 10 years and unlimited mileage for oil-sludge damage. The center also asks the Chrysler group to reimburse consumers.

Engine repairs average \$5,200 and engine replacement totals as much as \$9,500, the letter states.

The Chrysler group will not specify how many vehicles were equipped with the 2.7-liter V-6 during the 1998-2002 model year period.

Failure to follow a proper oil-change schedule is "one of the most common causes" of engine "sludging," the company says.

Owner manuals suggest an oil change every 3,000 miles in city driving and every 7,500 miles in highway driving, the company says.

The company is working with customers through its dealerships "to find reasonable and appropriate resolution" of individual complaints, Locricchio says.

The 2005 Chrysler 300 and Dodge Magnum are available with a 2.7-liter V-6 engine. But the engine is mounted front-to-back to power the rear-wheel-drive models. In the 1998-2002 vehicles, the engine was mounted sideways for front-wheel drive.

The change in engine placement between fwd and rwd could affect the cooling and temperature of the engine, which may have an impact on oil sludge buildup.

Ten percent of 300 and Magnum buyers opt for the 2.7-liter V-6, says Kevin McCormick, Chrysler group spokesman.