



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**National Highway
Traffic Safety
Administration**

400 Seventh Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590

AUG 14 2003

CERTIFIED MAIL
RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED

Mr. William R. Willen
Managing Counsel
Product Regulatory Office
American Honda Motor Co., Inc.
1919 Torrance Boulevard
Torrance, CA 90501-2746

NVS-214jry
PE03-039

Dear Mr. Willen:

As you know, NHTSA's Office of Defects Investigation (ODI) has opened a Preliminary Evaluation (PE03-039) to investigate allegations of alleged suspension collapse (while riding) due to centerstand crossmember separations on 2001-2003 Honda GL1800 "Gold Wing" motorcycles. To date, ODI is aware of eight owner complaints (list attached) related to this issue.

To gather more data about this subject, we request the following information. Unless otherwise stated in the text, the following definitions apply to this information request:

- **Subject vehicles:** all Myr 2001-2003 Honda GL1800 "Gold Wing" model motorcycles manufactured for sale or lease in the United States.
- **Subject component:** as show below, the centerstand crossmember (including the immediately adjoining frame elements and the welds securing the crossmember to the frame).



Centerstand crossmember



DOT AUTO SAFETY HOTLINE
888-DASH-2-DOT
888-327-4236

- **Alleged defect:** subject component separation (either full or partial) from a subject vehicle frame. This includes weld faults that may not have resulted in a crossmember separation.
- **Honda:** American Honda Motor Co., Inc. including, but not limited to, Honda Motor Co., Ltd. and any other entity (foreign or domestic) in any way participating in the design, engineering, testing, and/or manufacturing of the subject vehicles, all of their past and present officers and employees, whether assigned to the companies' principal offices or any of their field or other locations, including all of their divisions, subsidiaries (whether or not incorporated) and affiliated enterprises and all of their headquarters, regional, zone and other offices and their employees, and all agents, contractors, consultants, attorneys and law firms and other persons engaged directly or indirectly (e.g., employee of a consultant) by or under the control of Honda (including all business units and persons previously referred to), who were (or are) involved in any way with any of the following related to the alleged defect in the subject vehicles:
 - a. Design, engineering, analysis, modification or production (including, but not limited to, quality control);
 - b. Testing, assessment or evaluation;
 - c. Consideration, or recognition of potential or actual defects, reporting, record-keeping and information management, (e.g., complaints, field reports, warranty information, part sales), analysis, claims, or lawsuits; or
 - d. Communication to, from or intended for zone representatives, fleets, dealers, other field locations, or customers, including but not limited to people who have the capacity to obtain information from dealers and customers.
- **Document:** "Document(s)" is used in the broadest sense of the word and shall mean all original written, printed, typed, recorded, or graphic matter whatsoever, however produced or reproduced, of every kind, nature, and description, and all non-identical copies of both sides thereof, including, but not limited to, papers, letters, memoranda, correspondence, communications, electronic mail (e-mail) messages (existing in hard copy and/or in electronic storage), faxes, mailgrams, telegrams, cables, telex messages, notes, annotations, working papers, drafts, minutes, records, audio and video recordings, data, databases, other information bases, summaries, charts, tables, graphics, other visual displays, photographs, statements, interviews, opinions, reports, newspaper articles, studies, analyses, evaluations, interpretations, contracts, agreements, jottings, agendas, bulletins, notices, announcements, instructions, blueprints, drawings, as-builts, changes, manuals, publications, work schedules, journals, statistical data, desk, portable and computer calendars, appointment books, diaries, travel reports, lists, tabulations, computer printouts, data processing program libraries, data processing inputs and outputs, microfilms, microfiches, statements for services, resolutions, financial statements, governmental records, business records, personnel records, work orders, pleadings, discovery in any form, affidavits, motions, responses to discovery, all transcripts, administrative filings and all mechanical, magnetic, photographic and electronic records or recordings of any kind, including any storage media associated with computers, including, but not limited to, information on hard drives, floppy disks, backup tapes, and zip drives, electronic communications, including but not limited to, the Internet and shall

include any drafts or revisions pertaining to any of the foregoing, all other things similar to any of the foregoing, however denominated by Honda, any other data compilations from which information can be obtained, translated if necessary, into a usable form and any other documents. For purposes of this request, any document which contains any note, comment, addition, deletion, insertion, annotation, or otherwise comprises a non-identical copy of another document shall be treated as a separate document subject to production. In all cases where original and any non-identical copies are not available, "document(s)" also means any identical copies of the original and all non-identical copies thereof. Any document, record, graph, chart, film or photograph originally produced in color must be provided in color. Furnish all documents whether verified by the manufacturer or not. If a document is not in the English language, provide both the original document and an English translation of the document.

- **Other Terms:** To the extent that they are used in these information requests, the terms "claim," "consumer complaint," "dealer field report," "field report," "fire," "fleet," "good will," "make," "model," "model year," "notice," "property damage," "property damage claim," "rollover," "type," "warranty," "warranty adjustment," and "warranty claim," whether used in singular or in plural form, have the same meaning as found in 49 CFR 579.4.

In order for my staff to evaluate the alleged defect, certain information is required. Pursuant to 49 U.S.C. § 30166, please provide numbered responses to the following information requests. Insofar as Honda has previously provided a document to ODI, the company may produce it again or identify the document, the submission to ODI in which it was included and the precise location in that submission where the document is located. When documents are produced, the documents shall be produced in an identified, organized manner that corresponds with the organization of this information request letter (including all individual requests and subparts). When documents are produced and the documents would not, standing alone, be self-explanatory, the production of documents shall be supplemented and accompanied by explanation.

Please repeat the applicable request verbatim above each response. After Honda's response to each request, identify the source of the information and indicate the last date the information was gathered.

1. State, by model year and production month/year, the number of subject vehicles Honda has manufactured for sale or lease in the United States. Separately, for each subject vehicle Honda manufactured to date state the following:
 - a. Vehicle identification number (VIN);
 - b. Date of manufacture (mm/dd/yy);
 - c. Date warranty coverage commenced; and
 - d. The State in the United States where the vehicle was originally sold or leased (or delivered for sale or lease).

Provide the table in Microsoft Access 2000, or a compatible format, entitled "PRODUCTION DATA." See Enclosure 1, Data Collection Disc, for a pre-formatted table that provides further details regarding this submission.

2. State the number of each of the following, received by Honda, or of which it is otherwise aware, which relate to, or may relate to, the alleged defect in the subject vehicles:
 - a. Consumer complaints, including those from fleet operators;
 - b. Field reports, including dealer field reports;
 - c. Reports involving a crash, injury, or fatality, based on claims against the manufacturer involving a death or injury, notices received by the manufacturer alleging or proving that a death or injury was caused by a possible defect in a subject vehicle, property damage claims, consumer complaints, or field reports;
 - d. Property damage claims; and,
 - e. Third-party arbitration proceedings where mfg's short name is or was a party to the arbitration; and,
 - f. Lawsuits, both pending and closed, in which Honda is or was a defendant or codefendant.

For subparts "a" through "f," state the total number of each item (e.g., consumer complaints, field reports, etc.) separately. Multiple incidents involving the same vehicle are to be counted separately. Multiple reports of the same incident are also to be counted separately (i.e., a consumer complaint and a field report involving the same incident in which a crash occurred are to be counted as a crash report, a field report and a consumer complaint).

In addition, for items "c" through "f," provide a summary description of the alleged problem and causal and contributing factors and Honda's assessment of the problem, with a summary of the significant underlying facts and evidence for each incident involved. For items "e" and "f," identify the parties to the action, as well as the caption, court, docket number, and date on which the complaint or other document initiating the action was filed.

3. Separately, for each item (complaint, report, claim, notice, or matter) within the scope of your response to Request No. 2, state the following information:
 - a. Honda's file number or other identifier used;
 - b. The category of the item, as identified in Request No. 2 (i.e., consumer complaint, field report, etc.);
 - c. Vehicle owner or fleet name (and fleet contact person), address, and telephone number;
 - d. Vehicle's VIN;
 - e. Vehicle's mileage at time of incident;
 - f. Incident date;
 - g. Report or claim date;
 - h. Whether a crash is alleged;
 - i. Whether property damage is alleged;
 - j. Number of alleged injuries, if any;
 - k. Number of alleged fatalities, if any; and
 - l. Whether Honda made a vehicle "buy-back" offer.

Provide this information in Microsoft Access 2000, or a compatible format, entitled "REQUEST NUMBER TWO DATA." See *Enclosure 1, Data Collection Disc*, for a pre-formatted table that provides further details regarding this submission.

4. Produce copies of all documents related to each item within the scope of Request No. 2. Organize the documents separately by category (i.e., consumer complaints, field reports, etc.) and describe the method Honda used for organizing the documents.
5. State, by model and model year, a total count for all of the following categories of claims, collectively, that have been paid by Honda to date that relate to, or may relate to, the alleged defect in the subject vehicles: warranty claims; extended warranty claims; claims for good will services that were provided; field, zone, or similar adjustments and reimbursements; and warranty claims or repairs made in accordance with a procedure specified in a technical service bulletin or customer satisfaction campaign.

Separately, for each such claim, state the following information:

- a. Honda's claim number;
- b. Vehicle owner or fleet name (and fleet contact person) and telephone number;
- c. VIN;
- d. Date motorcycle was presented for repair;
- e. Vehicle mileage when motorcycle was presented for repair;
- f. Repairing dealer's or facility's name, telephone number, city, state, and ZIP code;
- g. Labor operation number;
- h. Problem code;
- i. Replacement part number(s) and description(s);
- j. Concern stated by customer; and
- k. Comment, if any, by dealer/technician relating to claim and/or repair.

Provide this information in Microsoft Access 2000, or a compatible format, entitled "WARRANTY DATA." See *Enclosure 1, Data Collection Disc*, for a pre-formatted table that provides further details regarding this submission.

6. Describe in detail the search criteria used by Honda to identify the claims identified in response to Request No. 5, including the labor operations, problem codes, part numbers and any other pertinent parameters used. Provide a list of all labor operations, labor operation descriptions, problem codes, and problem code descriptions applicable to the alleged defect in the subject vehicles. State, by make and model year, the terms of the new vehicle warranty coverage offered by Honda on the subject vehicles (i.e., the number of months and mileage for which coverage is provided and the vehicle systems that are covered). Describe any extended warranty coverage option(s) related to the alleged defect that Honda offered for the subject vehicles and state by option, model, and model year, the number of vehicles that are covered under each such extended warranty.
7. Produce copies of all service, warranty, and other documents that relate to, or may relate to, the alleged defect in the subject vehicles, that Honda has issued to any dealers, regional or zone offices, field offices, fleet purchasers (or other customers), or other entities. This

includes, but is not limited to, bulletins, advisories, informational documents, training documents, or other documents or communications, with the exception of standard shop manuals. Also include the latest draft copy of any communication, related in any way to the alleged defect, which Honda is planning to release to the aforementioned entities within the next 120 days.

8. Describe all assessments, analyses, tests, test results, studies, surveys, simulations, investigations, inquiries and/or evaluations (collectively, "actions") that relate to, or may relate to, the alleged defect in the subject vehicles that have been conducted, are being conducted, are planned, or are being planned by, or for, Honda. For each such action, provide the following information:
 - a. Action title or identifier;
 - b. The actual or planned start date;
 - c. The actual or expected end date;
 - d. Brief summary of the subject and objective of the action;
 - e. Engineering group(s)/supplier(s) responsible for designing and for conducting the action; and,
 - f. A brief summary of the findings and/or conclusions resulting from the action.

For each action identified, provide copies of all documents related to the action, regardless of whether the documents are in interim, draft, or final form. Organize the documents chronologically by action.

9. Describe all modifications or changes made by, or on behalf of, Honda in the design, material composition, manufacture, quality control, supply, or installation of the subject component, from the start of production to date, which relate to, or may relate to, the alleged defect in the subject vehicles. For each such modification or change, provide the following information:
 - a. The date or approximate date on which the modification or change was incorporated into vehicle production;
 - b. A detailed description of the modification or change;
 - c. The reason(s) for the modification or change;
 - d. The part numbers (service and engineering) of the original component;
 - e. The part number (service and engineering) of the modified component;
 - f. Whether the original unmodified component was withdrawn from production and/or sale, and if so, when;
 - g. When the modified component was made available as a service component; and,
 - h. Whether the modified component can be interchanged with earlier production components.

Also, provide the above information for any modification or change that Honda is aware of which may be incorporated into vehicle production within the next 120 days.

10. Describe all assessments, analyses, tests, test results, studies, surveys, simulations, investigations, inquiries and/or evaluations (including, but not limited to, those conducted pre-production - collectively, "actions") that relate to, or may relate to, subject vehicle

cornering clearance that have been conducted, are being conducted, are planned, or are being planned by, or for, Honda. For each such action, provide the following information:

- a. Action title or identifier;
- b. The actual or planned start date;
- c. The actual or expected end date;
- d. Brief summary of the subject and objective of the action;
- e. Engineering group(s)/supplier(s) responsible for designing and for conducting the action; and,
- f. A brief summary of the findings and/or conclusions resulting from the action and, where applicable, how the findings were incorporated into the production 2001-2003 GL1800.

For each action identified, provide copies of all documents related to the action, regardless of whether the documents are in interim, draft, or final form. Organize the documents chronologically by action.

11. Please provide the following information for the subject vehicles:

- a. Maximum intended lean angle (in degrees);
- b. The intended clearance (in inches) between the lowest point of a retracted center stand and the ground when the motorcycle is vertical; and
- c. The intended clearance (in inches) between the lower-most muffler tailpiece retaining screws (left and right, part nos. 18316-MCA-003 and 18336-MCA-003) and the ground when the motorcycle is vertical.

12. Furnish Honda's assessment of the alleged defect in the subject vehicles, including:

- a. The causal or contributory factor(s);
- b. The failure mechanism(s);
- c. The failure mode(s);
- d. The risk to motor vehicle safety that it poses;
- e. What warnings, if any, the operator would have that the alleged defect was occurring or about to occur; and
- f. The reports included with this inquiry.

This letter is being sent to Honda pursuant to 49 U.S.C. § 30166, which authorizes NHTSA to conduct any investigation that may be necessary to enforce Chapter 301 of Title 49 and to request reports and the production of things. It constitutes a new request for information. Honda's failure to respond promptly and fully to this letter could subject it to civil penalties pursuant to 49 U.S.C. § 30165 or lead to an action for injunctive relief pursuant to 49 U.S.C. § 30163. (Other remedies and sanctions are available as well.) Please note that maximum civil penalties under 49 U.S.C. § 30165 have increased as a result of the recent enactment of the Transportation Recall Enhancement, Accountability, and Documentation (TREAD) Act, Public Law No. 106-414 (signed November 1, 2000). Section 5(a) of the TREAD Act, codified at 49 U.S.C. § 30165(b), provides for civil penalties of up to \$5,000 per day, with a maximum of \$15 million for a related series of violations, for failing or refusing to perform an act required under 49 U.S.C. § 30166. This includes failing to respond to ODI information requests.

If Honda cannot respond to any specific request or subpart(s) thereof, please state the reason why it is unable to do so. If on the basis of attorney-client, attorney work product, or other privilege, Honda does not submit one or more requested documents or items of information in response to this information request, it must provide a privilege log identifying each document or item withheld, and stating the date, subject or title, the name and position of the person(s) from, and the person(s) to whom it was sent, and the name and position of any other recipient (to include all carbon copies or blind carbon copies), the nature of that information or material, and the basis for the claim of privilege and why that privilege applies.

Honda's response to this letter, in duplicate, together with a copy of any confidentiality request, must be submitted to this office by September 5, 2003. Please refer to PE03-039 in your response to this letter. If Honda finds that it is unable to provide all of the information requested within the time allotted, it must request an extension from me at (202) 366-4933 no later than five business days before the response due date. If Honda is unable to provide all of the information requested by the original deadline, it must submit a partial response by the original deadline with whatever information Honda then has available, even if an extension has been granted.

If Honda claims that any of the information or documents provided in response to this information request constitute confidential commercial material within the meaning of 5 U.S.C. § 552(b)(4), or are protected from disclosure pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 1905, it must submit supporting information together with the materials that are the subject of the confidentiality request, in accordance with 49 CFR Part 512, as amended (68 Fed. Reg. 44209 et seq; July 28, 2003), to the Office of Chief Counsel (NCC-113), National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Room 5219, 400 Seventh Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20590. Honda is required to submit two copies of the documents containing allegedly confidential information (except only one copy of blueprints) and one copy of the documents from which information claimed to be confidential has been deleted.

If you have any technical questions concerning this matter, please call Bob Young of my staff at (202) 366-4806.

Sincerely,

Original Signed By

Richard P. Boyd, Chief
MHDV Division
Office of Defects Investigation

Enclosure 1, one CD ROM titled Data Collection Disc containing three MSAccess files
Enclosure 2, Listing of eight related complaints.

WingFrame - 2000-2004 GL1800 Frame Weld Separations

Last Update: 8-5-03 @ 9:18P

No.	State	BuyBack?	VIN	MYR	BldDte	BuyDte	IncDte	Miles	Mode
1	GA		200011	2003	Apr-02	7/30/02	8/1/03	35555	Weld crack found during owner inspection
2	TX	Y	201208	2003	May-02	8/29/02	7/27/03	6000	Separated w/riding
3	WA	Y	200450	2003	Jun-02	8/11/02	6/17/03	5200	Separated w/riding
4	TX	Y	202940	2003	Jun-02	3/29/03	7/1/03	11478	Separated w/riding
5	MI	Y	207743	2003	Dec-02	3/8/03	6/1/03	3445	Separated w/riding
6	FL	Y	113152	2002	Apr-02	7/25/02	7/25/03	10165	Weld crack found during owner inspection
7	TX	Y	201150	2003	May-02	7/12/02	7/24/03	21000	Weld crack found during owner inspection
8	CA	Y	200573	2003	Jul-02	8/30/02	7/25/03	17000	Weld crack found during owner inspection

