
COMPLAINT INVESTIGATION CASE STUDY



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SMOG COMPLAINT INVESTIGATION (1 OF 10)

- BAR complaint investigations often require extensive research. In the case being presented, it required BAR to review the following:
 - Consumer Allegations
 - Consumer Request for Repairs
 - Initial Station Findings/Diagnosis
 - Consumer Additional Request
 - Repairs Performed
 - Post-Repair Actions
 - Bureau Representative Findings
 - Deficiencies Identified

SMOG COMPLAINT INVESTIGATION (2 OF 10)

- Consumer Allegations
 - Repairs performed failed to correct the cause of the Smog Check failure
 - Check Engine Light (CEL) remained illuminated after repair
 - Smog Check repair station failed to certify the vehicle after repairs
 - 2003 Chevrolet Malibu; 3.1 liter engine; 96,000 miles

SMOG COMPLAINT INVESTIGATION (3 OF 10)

- Consumer Request for Repairs
 - Requested Smog Check and Certification
 - Vehicle failed Smog Check inspection
 - CEL was illuminated
 - Misfire code P0303 (cylinder #3)

SMOG COMPLAINT INVESTIGATION (4 OF 10)

- Consumer Returned for Diagnosis
 - Consumer removed the vehicle from the subject station, then one month later returned for a complete diagnosis and repairs
 - Consumer applied for the Consumer Assistance Program and received an eligibility letter
 - Requested the station check the engine compression and ignition timing (Note: DIS, timing not adjustable)
 - Prior to returning to station, consumer replaced spark plugs

SMOG COMPLAINT INVESTIGATION 5 OF 10)

- Initial Diagnostic Findings of Station
 - Confirmed DTC P0303 remained
- Diagnostic Tests Performed and Results
 - Power balance test (Scan Tool function)
 - Based on power balance test, station recommended replacement of #3 injector and spark plug. No further tests were performed on cylinder #3 injector or it's circuits
 - Engine compression test was performed
 - Minimum specs: 100 psi
 - Results: 95, 100, 95, 95, 98, 100
 - Cylinder leak test performed on #3 cylinder and passed
 - No "first puff" readings or wet compression

SMOG COMPLAINT INVESTIGATION (6 OF 10)

- Repairs Performed
 - During compression test, #3 spark plug fuel soaked
 - Consumer authorized replacement of #3 injector and spark plug
 - After repair, the OBD monitors were still incomplete, preventing vehicle from passing the smog inspection

OBD II Diagnostics

Readiness Status

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Date/Time.....: 06-Jan-XXXXXXXXXX
Continuous Monitors
Misfire.....: Ready
Fuel System.....: Ready
Comprehensive Components: Ready
Non-Continuous Monitors
Catalyst.....: Not Ready
Heated Catalyst.....: Not Supported
Evaporative System.....: Not Ready
Secondary Air System.....: Not Supported
A/C System Refrigerant...: Not Supported
Oxygen Sensor.....: Not Ready
Oxygen Sensor Heater.....: Ready
EGR System.....: Not Ready
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SMOG COMPLAINT INVESTIGATION (7 OF 10)

- Repairs Performed
 - Station requested additional authorization to perform drive cycle to “set monitors”
 - Estimate for DTC repair should include repair verification (drive cycle) cost
 - Consumer declined and opted to retrieve vehicle

SMOG COMPLAINT INVESTIGATION (8 OF 10)

- Post-Repair Actions:
 - Consumer retrieved vehicle and noticed the CEL was still illuminated
 - Consumer went to a second repair facility and had a diagnostic scan performed (P0303 misfire code still present)
 - Consumer did not return to initial repair facility
 - Consumer filed complaint with BAR
 - BAR field representative recommends inspection by Referee while investigation continues

SMOG COMPLAINT INVESTIGATION (9 OF 10)

- Post-Repair Actions:
 - Vehicle failed the Referee inspection for an illuminated CEL caused by the misfire code P0303
 - A one-time repair cost waiver was issued by the Referee allowing certification of the vehicle

SMOG COMPLAINT INVESTIGATION (10 OF 10)

- Bureau Representative Findings:
 - Station failed to execute a systematic approach to the diagnosis of consumer's vehicle
 - Same DTC remained after repair
 - Repairs performed were not consistent with manufacturer's recommended procedures
 - No specific diagnostic tests were performed on the injector or control circuit
 - Stations are responsible for performing the most efficient repairs to achieve cost-effective emissions reductions
 - Mediation result
 - Consumer refund of \$422.00 and CAP refund of \$409.00

CONSUMER RESOURCES (1 OF 2)

- Consumer Assistance Program
 - Designed to provide California motorists with financial assistance options related to Smog Check
 - Up to \$1,200 (income eligible) on emissions repairs at a CAP-approved station
 - \$1,000 or \$1,500 (income eligible) for retirement at a CAP approved dismantler

CONSUMER RESOURCES (2 OF 2)

- Referee Stations
 - BAR's Referee Program provides consumers with an array of services related to Smog Check, emission controls, and other services
 - The Referee can, in some cases, issue a one-time repair cost waiver if the consumer meets eligibility criteria
 - For more information, visit the Referee website at www.asktheref.org

CONCLUSION

- California Air Resources Board data show the Smog Check Program results in a reduction of approximately 400 tons of smog-forming emissions from California's air each day
- Additionally, BAR's complaint resolution efforts result in approximately \$5 million being returned to consumers in the form of direct refunds, rework of vehicles at no charge, or adjustments to the final bill
- Consumer complaints give the Bureau an opportunity to investigate matters that may be affecting consumers on a larger scale and also educate Automotive Repair Dealers to help ensure future compliance with the Automotive Repair Act and/or Smog Check Program

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

Submit questions and/or comments to:

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