

Contaminated Fuel Incident

Date: 8 June 2012 – 13 June 2012

Vehicle: 2009 GMC 3500, 4x4, dually, extended cab w/ LMM 6.6L Duramax

Warranty Status: Still under warranty; 32,692 mi. on 8 June 2012

GMC Case #: 71-107-6220381

GMC Contact: Amber, GM Customer Satisfaction “area specialist” @ 866 790 5700 ext. 41020

The Problem: As we were heading west from Rapid City, SD, the truck developed what felt like a drive line vibration. We had experienced a drive line vibration with our 1994 Chevrolet pickup in 1994 and this vibration felt very similar. All gauges displayed normal readings and there were no warning messages displayed on the Driver Information Center (DIC) instrument panel screen. About 15 minutes later, as we were trying to make our way to the Rapid City GMC dealer, the truck engine electronics displayed a REDUCING ENGINE POWER message and immediately shut the engine power down enough to prevent movement of the truck and our 5th wheel trailer.

Resolution:

Good Sam Emergency Road Service personnel teamed with Tow Pros of Rapid City, SD to get our truck to McKie Buick/Pontiac/GMC in Rapid City and our 5th wheel to the Rapid City KOA with no towing charges billed to us.

Dealership service personnel determined that our fuel was contaminated with what appeared to be a lot of water and other unknown substances suspended in the separated mixture of liquids.

If I did the math correctly, parts charges totaled **\$7,107.89**. Labor charges totaled **\$1,412.70** (including labor for removing the fuel tank, disposing of the contaminated fuel, re-installing the tank, re-fueling the tank and replacing the filter). Tax, hazmat charge, and new fuel charges related portion of the bill to the fuel contamination totaled **\$615.84**.

My position as stated to the GMC representative:

GMC should cover the parts and labor involved in replacing the injectors and fuel pressure regulator because:

- 1) The GM recommended AC Delco filter let contaminants through to the injectors and fuel pressure regulator. (I have since found after market in-line fuel filtering systems that will trap solid particles larger than 1 micron as well as all air and all water. The AC Delco fuel filters will only remove particles larger than 4 microns.)
- 2) The water sensor didn't function properly in that it did not cause a message to be displayed on the instrument panel window (Driver Information Center) indicating water in the fuel.
- 3) The CHANGE FUEL FILTER message never appeared on the DIC screen. This should have been triggered by a fuel flow or fuel pressure sensor.

GMC's Reaction:

No effort was made by GM to analyze the fuel, filters, or functioning of the warning sensors. Our claim (case# 71-107-6220381) was denied by Amber, a GM Customer Satisfaction “area specialist” (Contact # 866 790 5700 ext. 41020). When pressed for her reasoning, Amber said

the claim was denied on the basis that home heating fuel had been mixed with my fuel. I told her that no one had said anything to me about home heating oil (L. J., the service manager was as surprised as I was). After ending my conversation with the “specialist”, L.J. and I discovered that she had talked to the service department switchboard operator who had looked at a sample of our fuel and told her it looked like home heating oil. Keep in mind that no part of our fuel or the filter contents had been analyzed to determine the exact nature of the contaminants.

The Fuel Problem:

I have yet to hear from the I-90 Travel Plaza (Shell station) management in Mitchell, SD regarding my assertion that the contaminated fuel came from their station. I’m searching Internet forums for comments regarding bad fuel from stations along that stretch of I-90. A Shell representative claims to be investigating, but only after I objected to their claim that there was no contamination problem at the station and provided him with a report from the [Weights & Measures/Inspections, SD Department of Public Safety](#). That report shows excess water in several of the stations tanks over an extended period of time. However, Shell seems to have lost interest in the case since it has been over a month since their last communication.

The Better Business Bureau initiated an investigation, also. Their response to me was similar to Shell’s until I sent a copy of the email from the [Weights & Measures/Inspections, SD Department of Public Safety](#). Of course, their investigation was of no more benefit than Shell’s.