

because the agency has determined that the antitheft device to be placed on the line as standard equipment is likely to be as effective in reducing and deterring motor vehicle theft as compliance with the parts-marking requirements of the Theft Prevention Standard.

**DATES:** The exemption granted by this notice is effective beginning with model year (MY) 2005.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Ms. Rosalind Proctor, Office of Planning and Consumer Standards, NHTSA, 400 Seventh Street, SW., Washington DC 20590. Ms. Proctor's phone number is (202) 366-0846. Her fax number is (202) 493-2290.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** In a petition dated March 19, 2003, DaimlerChrysler Corporation (DaimlerChrysler), requested an exemption from the parts-marking requirements of the theft prevention standard (49 CFR part 541) for the Chrysler Town and Country vehicle line, beginning with MY 2005. The petition requested an exemption from parts-marking requirements pursuant to 49 CFR part 543, Exemption from Vehicle Theft Prevention Standard, based on the installation of an antitheft device as standard equipment for the entire vehicle line.

Section 33106(b)(2)(D) of Title 49, United States Code, authorized the Secretary of Transportation to grant an exemption from the parts-marking requirements for not more than one additional line of a manufacturer for MYs 1997-2000. However, it does not address the contingency of what to do after model year 2000 in the absence of a decision under Section 33103(d). 49 U.S.C. 33103(d)(3) states that the number of lines for which the agency can grant an exemption is to be decided after the Attorney General completes a review of the effectiveness of antitheft devices and finds that antitheft devices are an effective substitute for parts-marking. The Attorney General has not yet made a finding and has not decided the number of lines, if any, for which the agency will be authorized to grant an exemption. Upon consultation with the Department of Justice, we determined that the appropriate reading of Section 33103(d) is that the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) may continue to grant parts-marking exemptions for not more than one additional model line each year, as specified for model years 1997-2000 by 49 U.S.C. 33106(b)(2)(C). This is the level contemplated by the Act for the period before the Attorney General's decision. The final decision on whether to continue granting exemptions will be

made by the Attorney General at the conclusion of the review pursuant to section 33103(d)(3).

DaimlerChrysler's submission is considered a complete petition as required by 49 CFR 543.7, in that it meets the general requirements contained in §543.5 and the specific content requirements of §543.6.

In its petition, DaimlerChrysler provided a detailed description and diagram of the identity, design, and location of the components of the antitheft device for the new vehicle line. DaimlerChrysler will install its antitheft device as standard equipment on the MY 2005 Chrysler Town & Country vehicle line. The antitheft device to be installed on the MY 2005 Chrysler Town & Country incorporates an ignition immobilizer system and an unauthorized vehicle start telltale light. The system does not include an audible or visual alarm as standard equipment.

The antitheft device incorporates a Sentry Key Immobilizer Module (SKIM), a Powertrain Control Module (PCM), and a sentry key. The Sentry Key Immobilizer System (SKIS) prevents the engine from running for more than 2 seconds unless a valid key is in the ignition switch. The immobilizer feature is activated when the key is removed from the ignition switch whether the vehicle doors are open or not. Once activated, only a valid key inserted into the ignition switch will disable immobilization and allow the vehicle to start and continue to run. A visual telltale light alerts the owner that an unauthorized attempt to start the vehicle has been made.

When the sentry key is placed in the ignition, the SKIM and the key communicate via a radio-frequency (RF) signal. After the SKIM determines that the key is valid, the SKIM requests a Seed Response Message code from the PCM on all vehicles. The PCM then verifies the code from the SKIM and transmits a key status (valid/invalid signal). The foregoing communication requires approximately 2 seconds to perform. Therefore, in order to avoid any perceived delay when starting the vehicle with a valid key, and to prevent unburned fuel from entering the exhaust, the engine is permitted to run for no more than 2 seconds if an invalid key is used. If the code from the SKIM is valid, the PCM immobilizes the vehicle by shutting down the engine (after the initial 2 second run). Only 6 consecutive invalid vehicle start attempts will be permitted. All further invalid attempts are locked out by not firing fuel injectors and not engaging the starter. Only the communication with a

valid key is required to permit the engine to start and run.

The SKIM also sends indicator light status messages to the Mechanical Instrument Cluster (MIC) to operate the telltale light functions. The telltale alerts the owner that an unauthorized vehicle start attempt has been made. The SKIM transmits the indicator light status messages via a J1850 Programmable Communications Interface (PCI) bus. Initially, the telltale will be illuminated for three seconds when the ignition switch is turned to the "ON" position. This serves as a bulb check. If the SKIM detects an invalid key when the immobilizer has not been disarmed and the ignition is in the "ON/START" position, or a key-related fault exists, the indicator light will flash following the indicator light test. The telltale light also functions as a system diagnostic indicator. The light comes ON and stays ON until after the indicator light test signifies that the SKIM has detected a system malfunction and/or that the SKIS has become inoperative.

Replacing the SKIM requires a secret key to decode the ignition keys. A copy of this secret key is stored in the PCM. When a SKIM is replaced, the secret key must be transferred into the SKIM. A diagnostic tool must be used to put the PCM and SKIM into secured access mode and a request to the controller to transmit the secret key to the SKIM via the J1850 PCI bus must be made.

DaimlerChrysler stated that the SKIM performs the interrogation with the transponder in the key using a Texas Instruments proprietary algorithm which results in a 40-bit number which allows for over one trillion combinations. Each ignition key used in the SKIS has an integral transponder chip. Ignition keys with this feature can be readily identified by a gray rubber cap molded onto the head of the key, while conventional ignition keys have a black molded rubber. The transponder chip is concealed beneath the molded rubber cap, where it is molded into the head of the metal key.

In order to ensure the reliability and durability of the device, DaimlerChrysler conducted tests based on its own specified standards and stated its belief that the device meets the stringent performance standards prescribed. Specifically, the device must demonstrate a minimum of 95 percent reliability with 90 percent confidence. This is the same standard that vehicle air bag systems are designed and tested to. In addition to the design and production validation test criteria, the SKIS undergoes a daily short term durability test whereby three randomly