

2019-02 – 2013-2018 Dodge Ram 2500/3500 Drag Link Assembly Welds

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Summary

This Inspection Bulletin provides guidance regarding inspection of the drag link assembly on certain Dodge Ram 2500/3500 pickup and cab chassis vehicles that are subject to National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) Safety Recall 19V-021. In accordance with the manufacturer's approved recall remedy, these vehicles may have the outboard steering linkage jam nuts welded to the adjuster sleeve, which should not be cited as an out-of-service condition.

Background

Fiat Chrysler Automobiles US LLC (FCA) initiated a voluntary safety recall of certain 2013-2018 Dodge Ram 2500/3500 pickup and cab chassis vehicles because the outboard steering linkage jam nut(s) could loosen, allowing one end of the drag link to separate from the adjuster sleeve. A drag link separation can result in a loss of directional steering control, which can cause a vehicle crash without warning.

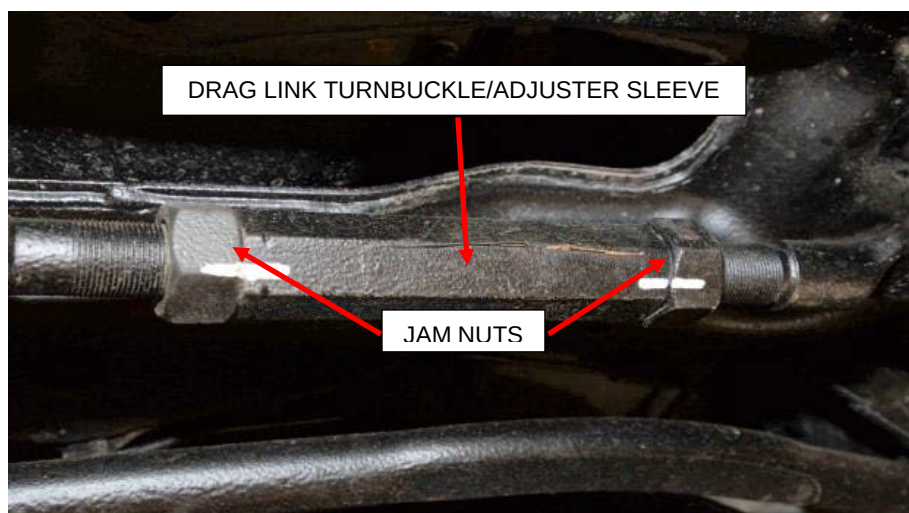


Figure 1: Drag Link Assembly

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FCA developed a remedy to address the identified defect that involves welding the jam nuts to the adjuster sleeve to ensure that (1) the nuts do not loosen and (2) the drag link does not separate from the adjuster sleeve. Specifically, a weld is applied along the length of one turnbuckle flat on each jam nut.

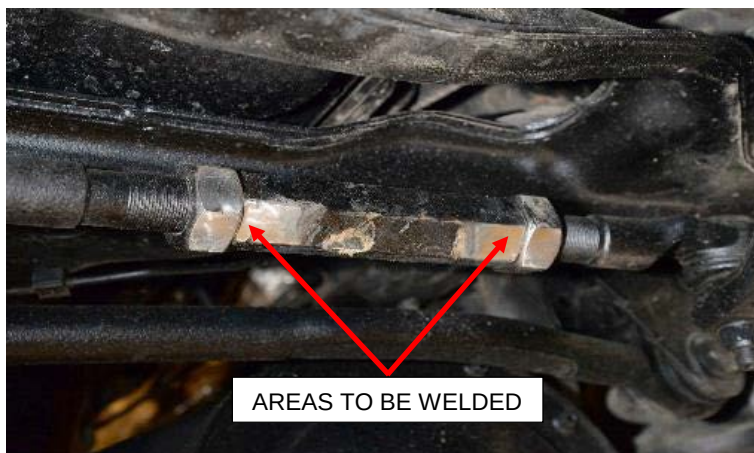


Figure 2: Areas to be Welded



Figure 3: Drag Link Assembly with Welded Remedy Completed

The affected vehicles, when operated (1) in combination with a trailer with a gross combination weight rating (GCWR) or gross combination weight (GCW) (whichever is greater) of 10,001 pounds (4,536 kg) or more and (2) in interstate commerce, are considered commercial motor vehicles and are subject to the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSRs).

While § 393.209 of the FMCSRs does not expressly prohibit welds on a drag link assembly, a weld on the drag link assembly may be cited as a violation under section § 396.3(a)(1) which requires all parts and accessories necessary for safe operation at all times.

Additionally, Item 10.c.(2) of the CVSA North American Standard Out-of-Service Criteria (OOSC) prohibits **“any obvious welded repair(s)”** of the front axle beam and all steering components other than the steering column (including hub) to include the drag link assembly.

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Recall Information

Vehicles Subject to NHTSA Recall 19V-021

- 2013-2018 Ram 3500 equipped with 4x4 style steering system
Production Dates: Feb. 7, 2013-Dec. 29, 2018
- 2014-2018 Ram 3500 chassis cab equipped with 4x4 style steering system
Production Dates: June 6, 2013-Dec. 28, 2018
- 2014-2018 Ram 2500 equipped with 4x4 style steering system
Production Dates: June 4, 2013-Dec. 29, 2018

For complete information regarding the NHTSA Part 573 Safety Recall Report, refer to Attachment 1.

For complete information regarding the FCA Dealer Service Instructions for the recall remedy, refer to Attachment 2.

Guidance

If the recall remedy has not been completed, the end of the drag link may separate from the adjuster sleeve, which can result in (1) a loss of directional steering control and (2) a vehicle crash without warning. As such, operation of a vehicle subject to the recall that has had the manufacturer-approved remedy completed is determined to be safer than operation of the same vehicle with jam nuts that may loosen.

Based on the above, inspectors are **NOT** to place the affected 2013-2018 Dodge Ram 2500/3500 pickup and cab chassis vehicles out of service if they have the outboard steering linkage jam nuts welded to the adjuster sleeve as shown in Figure 3 on the previous page. This is the manufacturer-developed and approved remedy to the identified safety defect and should not be considered an out-of-service condition under Item 10.c.(2) of the NAS OOSC.

If a vehicle that is potentially subject to the recall is inspected, and has not had the remedy completed, inspectors are asked to instruct the operator to go to www.nhtsa.gov/recalls and enter the VIN to learn if the vehicle needs to be repaired as part of the recall.

If a vehicle has already had the remedy completed, and there is a crack or other failure of the weld, the inspector should notify the NHTSA Vehicle Safety Hotline toll-free at 888-327-4236, and reference NHTSA Recall 19V-021. Inspectors will **NOT** place the vehicle out of service for a crack in the weld. If the jam nut is found to be loose, then the vehicle will be placed out of service under Item 10.i. in the OOSC.