

importers who have registered with NHTSA pursuant to 49 CFR Part 592. As specified in 49 CFR 593.7, NHTSA publishes notice in the **Federal Register** of each petition that it receives, and affords interested persons an opportunity to comment on the petition. At the close of the comment period, NHTSA decides, on the basis of the petition and any comments that it has received, whether the vehicle is eligible for importation. The agency then publishes this decision in the **Federal Register**.

Champagne Imports of Lansdale, Pennsylvania ("Champagne") (Registered Importer 90-009) has petitioned NHTSA to decide whether 1995-1998 Volvo 850 Turbo passenger cars are eligible for importation into the United States. The vehicles which Champagne believes are substantially similar are 1995-1998 Volvo 850 Turbo Sedans that were manufactured for importation into, and sale in, the United States and certified by their manufacturer as conforming to all applicable Federal motor vehicle safety standards.

The petitioner claims that it carefully compared non-U.S. certified 1995-1998 Volvo 850 Turbo passenger cars to their U.S.-certified counterparts, and found the vehicles to be substantially similar with respect to compliance with most Federal motor vehicle safety standards.

Champagne submitted information with its petition intended to demonstrate that non-U.S. certified 1995-1998 Volvo 850 Turbo passenger cars, as originally manufactured, conform to many Federal motor vehicle safety standards in the same manner as their U.S.-certified counterparts, or are capable of being readily altered to conform to those standards.

Specifically, the petitioner claims that non-U.S. certified 1995-1998 Volvo 850 Turbo passenger cars are identical to their U.S. certified counterparts with respect to compliance with Standard Nos. 102 *Transmission Shift Lever Sequence* . . . , 103 *Defrosting and Defogging Systems*, 104 *Windshield Wiping and Washing Systems*, 105 *Hydraulic Brake Systems*, 106 *Brake Hoses*, 109 *New Pneumatic Tires*, 113 *Hood Latch Systems*, 116 *Brake Fluid*, 124 *Accelerator Control Systems*, 201 *Occupant Protection in Interior Impact*, 202 *Head Restraints*, 204 *Steering Control Rearward Displacement*, 205 *Glazing Materials*, 206 *Door Locks and Door Retention Components*, 207 *Seating Systems*, 209 *Seat Belt Assemblies*, 210 *Seat Belt Assembly Anchorages*, 212 *Windshield Retention*, 216 *Roof Crush Resistance*, 219

Windshield Zone Intrusion, and 302 *Flammability of Interior Materials*.

Additionally, the petitioner states that the non-U.S. certified 1995-1998 Volvo 850 Turbo complies with the Bumper Standard found in 49 CFR Part 581 and with the Theft Prevention Standard found in 49 CFR Part 541.

Petitioner also contends that the vehicle is capable of being readily altered to meet the following standards, in the manner indicated:

Standard No. 101 *Controls and Displays*: (a) substitution of a lens marked "Brake" for a lens with a noncomplying symbol on the brake failure indicator lamp; (b) installation of a seat belt warning lamp that displays the appropriate symbol; (c) recalibration of the speedometer/odometer from kilometers to miles per hour.

Standard No. 108 *Lamps, Reflective Devices and Associated Equipment*: (a) installation of U.S.-model headlamp assemblies that incorporate headlamps with DOT markings; (b) installation of U.S.-model front and rear sidemarker/reflector assemblies; (c) installation of U.S.-model taillamp assemblies; (d) installation of a high-mounted stop lamp if the vehicle is not already so equipped.

Standard No. 110 *Tire Selection and Rims*: installation of a tire information placard.

Standard No. 111 *Rearview Mirror*: replacement of the passenger side rearview mirror with a U.S.-model component.

Standard No. 114 *Theft Protection*: installation of a warning buzzer microswitch in the steering lock assembly and a warning buzzer.

Standard No. 118 *Power Window Systems*: rewiring of the power window system so that the window transport is inoperative when the ignition is switched off.

Standard No. 208 *Occupant Crash Protection*: (a) installation of a U.S.-model seat belt in the driver's position, or a belt webbing-actuated microswitch inside the driver's seat belt retractor; (b) installation of an ignition switch-actuated seat belt warning lamp and buzzer; (c) replacement of the driver's and passenger's side air bags and knee bolsters with U.S.-model components if the vehicle is not already so equipped. The petitioner states that the vehicle is equipped with combination lap and shoulder restraints that adjust by means of an automatic retractor and release by means of a single push button at both front designated seating positions, with combination lap and shoulder restraints that release by means of a single push button at both rear outboard designated seating positions, and with a lap belt in

the rear center designated seating position.

Standard No. 214 *Side Impact Protection*: installation of reinforcing beams.

Standard No. 301 *Fuel System Integrity*: installation of a rollover valve in the fuel tank vent line between the fuel tank and the evaporative emissions collection canister.

The petitioner also states that a vehicle identification number plate must be affixed to the vehicle to meet the requirements of 49 CFR Part 565.

Interested persons are invited to submit comments on the petition described above. Comments should refer to the docket number and be submitted to: Docket Section, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Room 5109, 400 Seventh Street, S.W., Washington, DC 20590. It is requested but not required that 10 copies be submitted.

All comments received before the close of business on the closing date indicated above will be considered, and will be available for examination in the docket at the above address both before and after that date. To the extent possible, comments filed after the closing date will also be considered. Notice of final action on the petition will be published in the **Federal Register** pursuant to the authority indicated below.

Authority: 49 U.S.C. 30141(a)(1)(A) and (b)(1); 49 CFR 593.8; delegations of authority at 49 CFR 1.50 and 501.8.

Issued on: December 7, 1998.

Marilynne Jacobs,

Director, Office of Vehicle Safety Compliance.

[FR Doc. 98-32970 Filed 12-10-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910-59-P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

Petition for Exemption From the Federal Motor Vehicle Theft Prevention Standard; General Motors

AGENCY: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA)
Department of Transportation (DOT)

ACTION: Grant of petition for exemption.

SUMMARY: This notice grants in full the petition of General Motors Corporation (GM) for an exemption of a high-theft line, the Pontiac Grand Am, from the parts-marking requirements of the Federal Motor Vehicle Theft Prevention Standard. This petition is granted 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. GM requested confidential treatment for some of the information and attachments submitted in support of its petition. In a letter to GM dated [awaiting letter granting confidentiality], the agency granted the petitioner's request for confidential treatment of most aspects of its petition.

DATES: The exemption granted by this notice is effective beginning with model year (MY) 2000.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ms. Rosalind Proctor, Office of Planning and Consumer Programs, NHTSA, 400 Seventh Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20590. Ms. Proctor's telephone number is (202) 366-0846. Her fax number is (202) 493-2739.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: In a petition dated August 27, 1998, General Motors Corporation (GM), requested an exemption from the parts-marking requirements of the Theft Prevention Standard (49 CFR Part 541) for the Pontiac Grand Am car line. The petition is 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 line.

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

In its petition, GM provided a detailed description and diagram of the identity, design, and location of the components of the antitheft device for the new line. GM will install its "Passlock" antitheft device as standard equipment on its MY 2000 Pontiac Grand Am car line. GM stated that the "Passlock" device provides the same kind of functionality as the "VATS", "PASS-Key" and "PASS-Key II" devices but features an electronically-coded lock cylinder rather than an electrically-coded ignition key. Specifically, when the sensor detects proper lock rotation, it sends a code to the body function controller. If the correct code is received, fuel is enabled. If an incorrect code is received, fuel will be disabled for a ten-minute lockout period during which any attempts to start the vehicle will be unsuccessful.

In order to ensure the reliability and durability of the device, GM conducted tests, based on its own specified standards. GM provided a detailed list of the tests conducted. GM states its

belief that the device is reliable and durable since it complied with its specified requirements for each test. GM also stated that the "Passlock" device is designed to provide protection against any attempts to defeat it by overriding its lock assembly with an external magnet, forcibly removing the ignition lock cylinder, forcibly rotating the lock, applying a torque to the lock cylinder or its keyway, bypassing the vehicle's lock assembly electronics, or by removing its battery power.

GM compared the "Passlock" device proposed for the Pontiac Grand Am line with its first generation "PASS-Key" device, which the agency has determined to be as effective in reducing and deterring motor vehicle theft as would compliance with the parts-marking requirements. GM stated that its "Passlock" device is activated when the owner/operator turns off the ignition of the vehicle and removes the key. According to GM, no other intentional action is necessary to achieve protection of the vehicle other than removing the key from the ignition. The "PASS-Key" devices are activated in the same manner. GM believes that its "Passlock" antitheft device will be at least as effective as its "PASS-Key" and "VATS" devices.

The following GM car lines have the "Passlock" device as standard equipment and have been granted a full exemption from the parts-marking requirements: The Chevrolet Cavalier, beginning with MY 1997 (see 61 FR 12132, March 25, 1996), the Pontiac Sunfire, beginning with MY 1998 (see 62 FR 20240, April 25, 1997), and the Oldsmobile Alero, beginning with MY 1999 (see 63 FR 24587). GM stated that the theft rates, as reported by the National Crime Information Center, are lower for GM models equipped with "PASS-Key"-like devices which have been granted exemptions from the parts-marking requirements than theft rates for similar, earlier models that have been parts-marked. Therefore, GM concludes that the "PASS-Key"-like devices are more effective in deterring motor vehicle theft than the parts-marking requirements of 49 CFR Part 541. GM also concluded that based on the system performance of "PASS-Key"-like devices on other GM models, and the similarity of design and functionality of the "Passlock" device on the Pontiac Grand Am to the "PASS-Key" device, it believes that the agency should determine that the proposed device will be at least as effective in deterring theft as the parts-marking requirements of 49 CFR part 541.

Based on comparison of the reduction in theft rates of Chevrolet Corvettes

using a passive antitheft device and audible/visible alarm with the reduction in theft rates for the Chevrolet Camaro and Pontiac Firebird models equipped with a passive antitheft device without an alarm, GM believes that an alarm or similar attention attracting device is not necessary and does not compromise the antitheft performance of these systems.

The agency notes that the reason that the vehicle lines whose theft data GM cites in support of its petition received only a partial exemption from parts-marking was that the agency did not believe that the antitheft device on these vehicles ("PASS-Key" and "PASS-Key II") by itself would be as effective as parts-marking in deterring theft because it lacked an alarm system. On that basis, it decided to require GM to mark the vehicle's most interchangeable parts (the engine and transmission), as a supplement to the antitheft device. Like those earlier antitheft devices GM used, the new "Passlock" device on which this petition is based also lacks an alarm system. Accordingly, it cannot perform one of the functions listed in 49 CFR part 543.6(a)(3), that is, to call attention to unauthorized attempts to enter or move the vehicle.

Since deciding those petitions, however, the agency became aware that theft data shows declining theft rates for GM vehicles equipped with either version of the "PASS-Key" system. Based on that data, it concluded that the lack of a visible or audible alarm had not prevented the antitheft device from being effective protection against theft and granted three GM petitions for full exemptions for car lines equipped with "PASS-Key II". See 60 FR 25939 (May 15, 1995) granting in full the petition for the Chevrolet Lumina and Buick Regal car lines equipped with "PASS-Key II"; 58 FR 44874 (August 25, 1993), granting in full the petition for exemption of the Buick Riviera and Oldsmobile Aurora car lines equipped with "PASS-Key II"; and 62 FR 20058 (April 24, 1997), granting in full the petition for exemption of the Cadillac Seville car line equipped with "PASS-Key II". In all three of those instances, the agency concluded that a full exemption was warranted because "PASS-Key II" had shown itself as likely as parts-marking to be effective protection against theft despite the absence of a visible or audible alarm.

The agency concludes that, given the similarities between the "Passlock" device and the "PASS-Key" and "PASS-Key II" systems, it is reasonable to assume that "Passlock", like those systems, will be as effective as parts-marking in deterring theft. The agency believes that the device will provide the

other types of performance listed in 49 CFR 543.6(a)(3): promoting activation; preventing defeat or circumvention of the device by unauthorized persons; preventing operation of the vehicle by unauthorized entrants; and ensuring the reliability and durability of the device.

As required by 49 U.S.C. 33106 and 49 CFR 543.6(a)(4) and (5), the agency finds that GM has provided adequate reasons for its belief that the antitheft device will reduce and deter theft. This conclusion is based on the information GM provided about its antitheft device. This confidential information included a description of reliability and functional tests conducted by GM for the antitheft device and its components.

For the foregoing reasons, the agency hereby grants in full GM's petition for exemption for the MY 2000 Pontiac Grand Am car line from the parts-marking requirements of 49 CFR Part 541.

If GM decides not to use the exemption for this line, it must formally notify the agency, and, thereafter, the line must be fully marked as required by 49 CFR 541.5 and 541.6 (marking of major component parts and replacement parts).

NHTSA notes that if GM wishes in the future to modify the device on which this exemption is based, the company may have to submit a petition to modify the exemption. § 543.7(d) states that a Part 543 exemption applies only to vehicles that belong to a line exempted under this part and equipped with the antitheft device on which the line's exemption is based. Further, § 543.9(c)(2) provides for the submission of petitions "to modify an exemption to permit the use of an antitheft device similar to but differing from the one specified in that exemption." The agency wishes to minimize the administrative burden which § 543.9(c)(2) could place on exempted vehicle manufacturers and itself.

The agency did not intend in drafting Part 543 to require the submission of a modification petition for every change to the components or design of an antitheft device. The significance of many such changes could be *de minimis*. Therefore, NHTSA suggests that if the manufacturer contemplates making any changes the effects of which might be characterized as *de minimis*, it should consult the agency before preparing and submitting a petition to modify.

Authority: 49 U.S.C. 33106; delegation of authority at 49 CFR 1.50.

Issued on: December 7, 1998.

L. Robert Shelton,

Associate Administrator for Safety Performance Standards.

[FR Doc. 98-32964 Filed 12-10-98; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Surface Transportation Board

[STB Finance Docket No. 33679]

SierraPine—Lease and Operation Exemption—Sierra Pacific Industries

SierraPine, a noncarrier, has filed a notice of exemption under 49 CFR 1150.31 to lease and operate approximately 12 miles of rail line known as the Amador Branch, which is owned by Sierra Pacific Industries (Sierra Pacific),¹ between milepost 0.0 at Ione and milepost 12.0 at Martell,² in Amador County, CA.

Although there was another planned and approved transaction involving the sale of this same rail line to Sierra Railroad Company (Sierra),³ SierraPine indicates in its notice that Sierra Pacific and Sierra have mutually agreed not to complete this sale. Therefore, Sierra Pacific retains control and ownership of the above-described rail line.

The transaction was scheduled to be consummated on or shortly after November 25, 1998.

If the verified notice contains false or misleading information, the exemption is void *ab initio*. Petitions to revoke the exemption under 49 U.S.C. 10502(d) may be filed at any time. The filing of a petition to revoke will not automatically stay the transaction.

An original and 10 copies of all pleadings, referring to STB Finance Docket No. 33679, must be filed with the Surface Transportation Board, Office of the Secretary, Case Control Unit, 1925 K Street, NW, Washington, DC 20423-0001. In addition, one copy of each pleading must be served on James F. Flint, Grove, Jaskiewicz and Cobert, 1730 M Street, NW, Suite 400, Washington, DC 20036.

Board decisions and notices are available on our website at "WWW.STB.DOT.GOV."

¹ See *Sierra Pacific Industries—Acquisition and Operation Exemption—Amador Central Railroad Company*, STB Finance Docket No. 33378 (STB served Apr. 9, 1997).

² The Amador Branch includes a yard and repair shops at Martell as well as additional spur trackage at the Sierra Pacific mill and particle board plant located at milepost 11.6.

³ See *Sierra Railroad Company—Acquisition and Operation Exemption—Sierra Pacific Industries*, STB Finance Docket No. 33525 (STB served Dec. 2, 1997).

Decided: December 4, 1998.

By the Board, David M. Konschnik, Director, Office of Proceedings.

Vernon A. Williams,

Secretary.

[FR Doc. 98-32999 Filed 12-10-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4915-00-P

DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

Office of Thrift Supervision

Submission for OMB Review; Comment Request

December 3, 1998.

The Office of Thrift Supervision (OTS) has submitted the following public information collection requirement(s) to OMB for review and clearance under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, Public Law 104-13. Interested persons may obtain copies of the submission(s) by calling the OTS Clearance Officer listed. Send comments regarding this information collection to the OMB reviewer listed and to the OTS Clearance Officer, Office of Thrift Supervision, 1700 G Street, N. W., Washington, D.C. 20552.

OMB Number: 1550-0096.

Form Number: OTS Form 1661.

Type of Review: Extension of an already approved collection.

Title: Minority Thrift Certification.

Description: This information is needed to help OTS remain a reliable source of information regarding the universe of minority-owned thrifts, in accordance with our responsibilities under Section 308 of FIRREA.

Respondents: Savings and Loan Associations and Savings Banks.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 34.

Estimated Burden Hours Per Respondents: .5 hours.

Frequency of Response: Annually.

Estimated Total Reporting Burden: 17 hours.

Clearance Officer: Mary Rawlings-Milton, (202) 906-6028, Office of Thrift Supervision, 1700 Street, N. W., Washington, D.C. 20552.

OMB Reviewer: Alexander Hunt, (202) 395-7860, Office of Management and Budget, Room 10202, New Executive Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20503.

Celia Winter,

Director, Dissemination Branch.

[FR Doc. 98-33002 Filed 12-10-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 6720-01-P