



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**National
Highway
Traffic Safety
Administration**

OFFICE OF DEFECTS INVESTIGATION

ODI RESUME

Investigation: EQ19001

Prompted By: Recall 18V-209 review

Date Opened: 07/02/2019

Date 08/20/2025

Closed:

Investigator: Choon Lee

Reviewer: Alexander Ansley

Approver: Tanya Topka

Subject: Seat Belt Buckle Casings may Fail

MANUFACTURER & PRODUCT INFORMATION

Manufacturer: Amaya-Astron Seating

**Affected
Manufacturers:** Volvo Bus Corporation, Van Hool N.V., Prevost Car (US) Inc.

Products: 2015-2018 Van Hool CX45, TD925, TDX25, TX40, TX45; 2016-2018 Van Hool CX35; 2016 Volvo 9700; and 2018 Prevost X3-45

Population: 9,894

**Problem
Description:** The passenger seat belt buckles outer casing may fail leaving the seat belt buckle mechanism exposed.

ACTION/SUMMARY INFORMATION

Action: Close Equipment Query (EQ)

Summary:

On March 30, 2018, Van Hool N.V. (Van Hool) notified the Office of Defects Investigation (ODI) of a safety defect that exists in certain model year (MY) 2015-2018 CX45, TD925, TDX25, TX40, TX45, and 2016-2018 CX35 motorcoaches. The passenger seat belt buckle's outer casing may fail, leaving the seat belt buckle mechanisms exposed. The exposed seat belt buckle mechanisms may reduce the seat occupants' likelihood of using the seat belt, increasing the risk of injury in the event of a crash. This recall of vehicles with the subject seat belt buckle casings was designated recall 18V-209. In its recall filing, Van Hool identified the component manufacturer as Fasching Salzburg.

Based on Early Warning Reporting (EWR), field reports, and warranty claims aggregate data, NHTSA identified that the defective part in Van Hool's recall was potentially used in vehicles manufactured by Volvo Bus Corporation (Volvo), Motor Coach Industries (MCI), and Prevost Car (US) Inc. (Prevost). NHTSA opened this Equipment Query (EQ) investigation, EQ19-001, to determine if the seat belt buckle casing at issue in recall 18V-209 constituted a safety defect in Volvo, MCI or Prevost vehicles, thereby requiring additional recalls.

On July 23, 2019, NHTSA sent an Information Request (IR) letter to Volvo requesting that for all of the seatbelt buckles Volvo uses, or has used, as original or replacement equipment on 2016

model year Volvo 9700 buses, that it provide the Volvo part number(s), the seatbelt manufacturer's or supplier's part number(s), the manufacturer's or supplier's name and their contact information. In the IR, NHTSA further requested that Volvo state the number of each of the above seatbelts that Volvo has distributed as replacement items for the original equipment seatbelts and provide the model and model year of the vehicle in which it is used and month/year of sale (including the cut-off date for sales, if applicable). Finally, NHTSA requested that Volvo provide two samples of each seat belt type/brand/part number identified by Volvo.

On October 23, 2019, NHTSA sent an IR letter to Amaya-Astron Seating, the seat manufacturer that installed the subject Fasching Salzburg seat belt buckle assemblies on the seats supplied to Van Hool. The purpose of this letter was to obtain, in part, a list of purchasers that were sold the seatbelt buckles as individual replacements or part of a seat and a list of all customers/manufacturers that received the same or similarly affected seatbelt buckles. Amaya-Astron identified MCI, Prevost, and Volvo as the motorcoach manufacturers to which it supplied seats with subject seat belt buckle casings.

NHTSA sent two IR Letters and Comprehensive Inquiry (CI) 21650H002 in support of EQ19-001 to MCI, Prevost, and Volvo Bus, in order to determine the relevant population. The IR letters and CI identified that the following vehicles used the subject seat belt buckle casings: 2016 Volvo Bus 9700 and 2018 Prevost X3-45. MCI reported that it had no vehicles with the suspected subject seat belt buckle casings.

Prevost and Volvo Bus reported that they did not observe a trend of seat belt buckle casing failures as observed in recall 18V-209. EWR, field reports, warranty claims data, and the information provided in the IR responses and CI similarly did not identify failure trends in the seat belt buckle casings.

In addition, Prevost recalled the population of its vehicles subject to this investigation, containing the subject seat belt buckle casings, in recall 22V-236 (2018 Prevost X3-45) based on a different safety defect of the seat belt buckle assembly. The recall addressed vehicles with seat belt buckles that may have exposed, frayed retaining cables. As a result, the seat belt assemblies may not secure the seat occupants in the event of a crash. The remedy for recall 22V-236 was the replacement of the entire seat belt buckle, including its casing, with a different part. That remedy also obviated the potential concern regarding casing failure that was at issue in recall 18V-209 and EQ19-001.

ODI is closing this investigation. During the course of this investigation, the agency reviewed the information that it received and also closely monitored the data over multiple years to see if any trends would emerge. During this time, a portion of the vehicles that were part of the original population of this investigation were recalled. NHTSA believes that enough time has now passed with such monitoring to consider the data as presenting no observable trends to suggest that the seat belt buckle casings subject to recall 18V-209 similarly pose a safety defect in the remaining population of vehicles equipped with the seat belt buckle casings. The agency will continue to

monitor the issue and will not hesitate to take appropriate action should such trends emerge in the future.

The closing of this investigation does not constitute a finding by NHTSA that a safety-related defect does not exist, including on other model or MY vehicles outside of the recall scope. The agency reserves the right to take further action if warranted by the circumstances.