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To:
Mr. Peter Wintermann
Sr. Manager Customer Service & Technical Support
High Tech Campus 92
5656 Eindhoven
The Netherlands

Reply to your letter from Dezember 5th / yet another use security incident!

Dear Mr. Wintermann,

I appreciate that Shimano finally approaches the subject compensation. The following items suffered heavily from the accident: broken helmet 90€, broken mudguard 55€, scratched and bent bell 7€, broken handle with bar end (pair) 42€, heavily scratched Alfine brake lever (left side) 39€. Total sum is 233,-€. I leave it up to your generosity if you want to offer me a compensation for the splinted varnish on the bike frame (several spots of approximately 5 mm in diameter). My bank account is [REDACTED] (SWIFT).

I do expect though that Shimano keeps the promise to supply my bike dealer Mr. [REDACTED] (Bike Niess, Vorsfelde) with a new transmission unit free of charge. This was promised by Mr. [REDACTED] on a telephone call in Dezember 2016 to Mr. [REDACTED]. This agreement was made to make my bike roadworthy again and give the analysis the needed time on the other hand.

Approximately one year after the accident with the slipping gear I experienced yet another fatal failure of the Alfine-11 hub. For a longer time the rear brake has had the tendency to squeak loudly. Several times I roughened the surfaces of the disc, tried out different brake pads and tried out, if a ring of felt on the outside of the disc absorbed potentially leaking oil from the hub. For a reason I did not understand at that time the disc showed the tendency to develop a yellow-brownish coating on the inner side. Then on September 7th this year suddenly I lost the complete brake performance of the rear brake fortunately in a minor risky situation.

The failure analysis showed that the centerlock mounting of the disc brake had separated from the bushing of the transmission hub. Even under tough conditions a failure like this must not happen! Again the reaction of Shimano (Paul Lange) astonished me. The claim was rejected yet again with the explanation the hub was already 6 years old! Does Shimano believe the duty of care for the customer's safety ends with the legally bound 2 years of sales guarantee Shimano must fulfill in Germany? Has this failure mode been studied thoroughly and understood by Shimano yet? If it really happened to be the first failure of its kind, then my hub showed two individual failures among millions of hubs working without complains as you claim. I ought to think about playing lottery. I should get rich over night! Apart from that Shimano should have had great interest to get access to a failure part from a security incident! How do you want to improve your products, if you ignore the field failures?

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If it happens to be a known failure mode, the reaction of Shimano is just as inexcusable. In this case Shimano must be aware that the connection of the centerlock mounting to the bushing of the hub is too weak to withstand the load reliably over lifetime.

At this point my assumption is that a small notch or other defect was the starting point for a material fatigue crack. At a certain point oil from the transmission unit began to leak. This probably explains by the way why so little oil was found in my hub when my dealer disassembled the hub after 10 months of operation¹. It could also explain why the disc of my disc brake had a yellowish coating on the inside only and why different brake pads only at the rear brake failed to get rid of squeaking noises on the long term! Unfortunately, the tough vibrations from the oil contaminated disc brake accelerated the material fatigue of the marginally designed mounting of the centerlock on the bushing (very thin material only). Since my hub is one of the first produced and I experienced two fatal failures within 35.000 km, I suppose that the poor manufacturing process must have been disturbed in some way adding up to the weak design (in Germany we call poor quality products like this one "Monday production").

In the end the claim was not only rejected by Paul Lange, but I was not even given support to purchase a new bushing at a reasonable price! Does Shimano really expect that I am going to spend the money for an expensive new Alfine-11 hub after I made the experience how lousy and dangerous this hub performed in the past? No! I will change to a safe and durable hub like the Rohloff Speedhub or a Pinion transmission both offering a reasonable service and a guarantee worth the name in case of a failure!

Since I experience no notable interest of the Shimano company to ensure the safety of use of their products over the product life time, I felt the necessity to warn other bike riders from the risks I experienced with the Alfine-11 hub. My site² in the internet has been visited by various people and some bike dealers in the passing weeks. In case some other bike riders suffer from a fatal accident caused by missing safety of useage in the future, my homepage will be the proof that the management of Shimano knew about the risks of the fragile and defective Alfine-11 hubs in the field. I hope the management of Shimano is at least aware of their personal liability!

I await your statement and hope that Shimano will return to the good tradition of focusing on the customer and a continuous improvement process Japanese companies are famous for not blind for problems and risks in the field.

Yours sincerely,



Dr. Bob Wittig

¹ Approximately from the repair date in early November 2016 to the failure date on September 7th in 2017.

² <http://www.bobs-alfine-11-problemblog.jimdo.com>