

BMW Z8 Club e.V.



BMW Z8 Club e.V. ♦ Kaiserhammer 45 ♦ D-95168 Marktleuthen

Information for all BMW Z8 Owners !!!

Your Message from

Our Initials

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Frame damages on the BMW Z8 roadster; verification results

Dear BMW Z8 owners,

In January 2006 we started to inform you about frame damages (deformation of the strut towers) on the BMW Z8 which could be caused by simply driving over an ordinary pothole. This topic was taken up by some BMW Z8 internet boards and by some automotive magazines and at times led to quite emotional discussions.

The BMW Z8 Club e.V. has pursued this issue in a very engaging, neutral and independent manner, considering every possible detail at great length and working in a collaborative effort with BMW AG. The first step (taking a survey that lasted until May 2006) was to ask all BMW Z8 owners around the world to report any damaged vehicles to the Club, to then proceed to the second step (verifying the collected data by September 2006) and have these damaged vehicles inspected independently.

Initially, 30% of all BMW Z8 that were reported to us in the survey, which ended May 2006, were reported as having the damage.

Each vehicle that was reported to the BMW Z8 Club e.V. during the verification period was inspected by September 2006. Currently we can not proof that one single BMW Z8 has received frame damage by driving over an ordinary pothole.

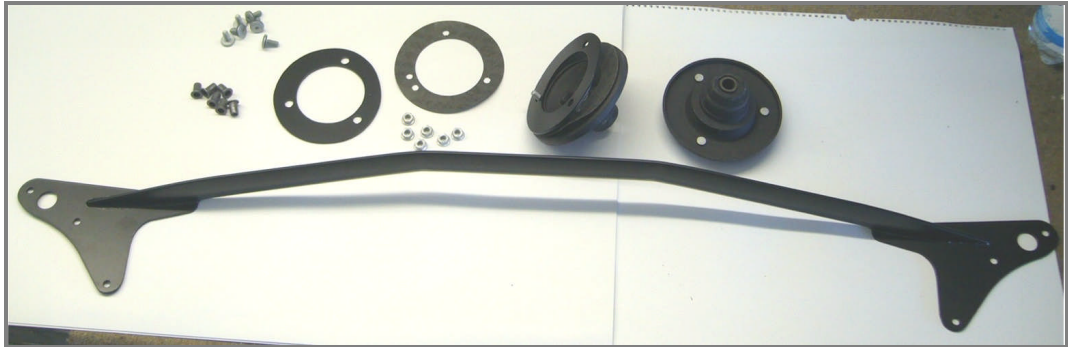
However we can proof that the vehicles that were inspected had previous damage, had been in accidents or had been damaged otherwise, and this damage, when compared to other vehicles, regardless of whether they had aluminium or steel construction and regardless of the car manufacturer would have led to similar deformation of the strut towers in any of them. This finding is inequitably supported by the two largest German automobile insurance companies and by independent automobile experts (which were contacted by us) according to which there are no abnormalities or increased damage frequency apparent on the BMW Z8. The insurance companies and the independent experts concur with BMW AG's statement on this issue, which states that the multiple emotionally discussed topic can be traced back to "accident similar situations" which would have led to damage on any other car as well.

There were isolated incidences in which an unforeseen event, such as e.g. sliding on wet pavement and a subsequent violent contact with the curb, led to the deformation of a strut tower with damage e.g. to other parts of the car. Afterwards, in general, these vehicles were still within the measurement tolerance guidelines set out by BMW. The insurance companies and the experts are of the opinion that in these situations the BMW Z8 is no more at risk for damage then any other car. The follow-up costs, however, are immense. The specific difference of the BMW Z8, in comparison to other cars is found in the special frame construction, the aluminium space-frame, which, in the case of strut tower deformation can only be repaired or exchanged at BMW repair centers and at an increased cost.

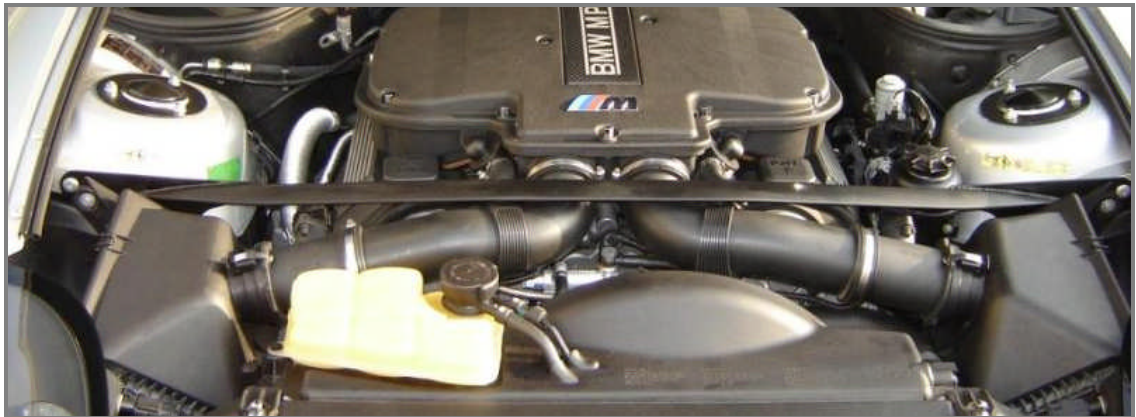
Aside from continually keeping our BMW Z8 owners informed on this topic it is also our aim to attain an alternative and less costly repair option from BMW AG, e.g. with the possibility to exchange damaged strut towers equivalent to other vehicles.

A Performance Package for the BMW Z8 exists since September 2006, consisting of a steel strut brace and steel strut supports with reinforcement rings which improve the stability in the front part of the vehicle, the kit can be installed at any BMW dealer and according to the installation manual takes about 8,5 hours to be installed. An alignment check will be done before the installation takes place.

Contents of the Performance Package



Installation position in the car



In our opinion the installation of the Performance Package can provide increased protection to the strut towers and in extreme cases the frame as well, especially in unforeseen situations, (e.g. sliding on wet pavement and subsequently hitting the curb violently).

Because of the unanimous consensus of the insurance companies and the experts on the report of BMW AG, the BMW Z8 Club e.V. comes to a conclusion on this issue as far as the survey and verification is concerned. We will continue the dialog with BMW AG with respect to the development of a less costly repair option for our cars.

With best regards

Jürgen Wunderlich
Acting President

Frequently asked questions (FAQ)

(State 10/2006)

Is the Performance Package available at every BMW dealer and can every dealer install it?

Yes, the Performance Package has the BMW part number 51 71 0 420 758 and the price in Germany, without installation, is € 371,20, incl. sales tax (from 10/2006).

How is it installed, what needs to be done?

The front wheels, the wheel house covers, the headlights and the air intake housings will be removed. The strut brace will be attached on both ends, with 3 drill holes on each side, using blind rivet nuts (12 mm holes need to be made in the frame structure) and torx- screws (M8). The upper bearings will additionally be screwed on, from above, with a reinforcement ring.

The removal of the headlights is a special affair on the Z8. Will the gaps still be aligned after the Performance Package has been installed.?

On the Z8 the headlight is attached to a base plate which will NOT be removed. This is why it will not be necessary to do any adjustments to the headlight after the Performance Package has been installed.

Does the BMW Z8 Club e.V. recommend the installation of the Performance Package?

Yes, because the installation reduces the risk of deformation to the strut towers in certain potentially dangerous situations and because the investment can be regarded as rather low cost in comparison to the value of the vehicle. The decision to install the Performance Package, however, is basically an individual one.

Is the construction of the Performance Package stiff enough to be an adequate solution in certain potentially dangerous situations?

Although the BMW Z8 is advertised as a "sports car", it's character can probably be seen more as that of a cruiser and so the solution that is being offered would satisfy most owners who do not necessarily wish to have a car with maximum chassis stiffness the way you find in a race car with the equivalent road performance.

Why is the cars software supposed to be up-dated, as it states in the manual?

Many BMW Z8 are not used as "daily drivers" and are seldom taken for inspections to the BMW dealers. So during the retrofit changes can be made to the software. (e.g. necessary OBD software updates). Basically the state of the software has got nothing to do with the installation of the Performance Package.

I would like to purchase a used BMW Z8, what do I need to be aware of in regard to this special issue?

A traceable car history is certainly helpful, more though than it would be with other cars, as well as having the vehicles measurements taken (using BMW guidelines, this includes using weights) in order to be able to detect and document any changes to the chassis geometry or to rule out any changes.

Will the BMW Z8 Club e.V. assist with the inspection of vehicles?

No, the BMW Z8 Club e.V. does not see itself in a position to render any assistance in this situation. We are recognised by BMW as an officially accredited club, but all the work we do is done by our members on a voluntary basis, we are not part of the BMW organisation.

Which "actions" does the BMW Z8 e.V. Club continue to take on this issues?

The Club has concluded the survey and the verification. However, we will keep all BMW Z8 owners and those interested informed on this issue, we will do so in a neutral fashion. One of our aims is to attain an alternative and less costly repair option from BMW AG, e.g. with the possibility to exchange damaged strut towers equivalent to other cars. Such a solution would, in case a frame exchange is necessary, reduce the extremely high costs dramatically and thus avoid classification as an economic total loss by the insurance companies. This way we would also secure the repair of damaged Z8's indefinitely.

Which impact does it have on the car when changes are made to the original state? (changes to the tire-rim combination, adjustable suspension systems, anti roll bars, chamber plates etc)

Insurance companies and automotive experts are of the opinion that changes made to the tires/rims and the chassis have a negative effect on the strain tolerance of the aluminum frame. We also see a problem in BMW's "generosity" in dealing with repair work that needs to be done outside of the warranty (if they charge for the work done, how much, or if they'll do it free of charge).

Does the standard run-flat tire technology have any impact on this issue?

Tires without run-flat characteristics are lighter, more comfortable and thus make a somewhat more positive impression. Today's run-flat tires are considerably more comfortable and weight less than those of the first generation, which leads to a decrease in strain on those parts of the car that are not supported by the suspension and thus leading to a decreases strain on the strut towers.

Is the use of lighter rims beneficial in this matter?

Yes, since, here too, the strain on the parts of the car that are not supported by the suspension can be reduced. Here we also see problems with BMW AG's potential "generosity" with repairs that need to be done outside of the warranty.