

1 IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS
2 FOR THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
3 CHARLESTON COUNTY

4 DEPOSITION OF BRIAN ARD

5 LONNIE HAMILTON, III, AND
6 ZOE'LIA L. CULBREATH,

7 Plaintiffs,

8

9 vs.

CASE NO. 2019-CP-10-06567

10 301 AUTO PARTS, LLC,
11

12 Defendant.
13

14

15 DEPONENT: BRIAN ARD

16 DATE: DECEMBER 10, 2020
17

18 TIME: 10:00 AM

19 LOCATION: REMOTE VIDEOCONFERENCE
20

21

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A P P E A R A N C E S

ON BEHALF OF PLAINTIFF:

HELLMAN, YATES & TISDALE, P.A.
BY: THOMAS S. TISDALE
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ON BEHALF OF DEFENDANT:

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ALSO PRESENT: SARAH PINCKNEY

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INDEX

EXAMINATION	PAGE
BY MR. TISDALE	4
CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER	52
EXHIBITS	
NO.	DESCRIPTION PAGE
3	Kia Safety Recall 21
4	Kia Safety Recall 21
5	Notice of Proposed Class Settlement 47
6	Photo of Mr. Hamilton's Kia 51

1 BRIAN ARD,
2 having been first duly sworn, was examined and
3 testified as follows:

4 EXAMINATION

5 BY MR. TISDALE:

6 Q. Mr. Ard, as I was saying, I'm going to
7 be asking you a few questions today, about the
8 situation -- claim that Mr. Hamilton has brought
9 against 301. And if you have any questions
10 whatsoever about anything that I'm asking that
11 needs to be clarified, I would appreciate you
12 letting me know, and I'll try to do so.

13 And also, as I said earlier, I don't
14 think this deposition will last very long, but if
15 it does -- I mean, if you want to take a break
16 for any reason, please let me know and we will do
17 that.

18 301's attorney, Ms. Varnado, is here
19 now, and if you have any reason to want to talk
20 to her during the deposition, you're perfectly
21 entitled to do that. She's representing you and
22 your company. The only thing I need to say is
23 that part of the rule is that when you do talk to
24 her, I'm entitled to know the content of that
25 conversation. So that's the only thing that I

1 wanted you to understand, but you're entitled to
2 talk to her anytime for any reason and to talk
3 about anything.

4 So I guess do you have any questions of
5 me about the procedure before we begin?

6 A. No, sir.

7 Q. Okay. And if at any time, of course,
8 you do have any questions, please let me know.

9 And Mr. Ard, what is your position at
10 301 Auto Parts?

11 A. Owner.

12 Q. And how long has the company been in
13 business?

14 A. Around 20 years.

15 Q. And have you owned it the entire time?

16 A. Yes, sir.

17 Q. Where do you live? What is your
18 residential address?

19 A. I live about a half a mile from here.

20 Q. What is the address, if you don't mind?

21 A. I just got a box. I don't -- it's
22 Truluck Road, but I couldn't tell you the number.
23 I just got a 9-1-1 number there. I'd have to
24 look it up. I can get it for you if you need me
25 to.

1 Q. I really don't need it. We'll let your
2 attorney know if we do need it for any reason.

3 A. Okay.

4 Q. Thank you. Mr. Ard, tell me a little
5 bit about the general business of 301 Auto Parts.
6 What do you do? What does the company do?

7 A. Well, we mostly sell used auto parts.
8 We buy cars from the insurance company and strip
9 the parts off of them and sell them and deliver
10 them.

11 Q. All right. And has that been the nature
12 of the business since it was founded about
13 20 years ago?

14 A. Yes, sir.

15 Q. What is the address of the business?

16 A. 3302 Starburst Road, Olanda 29114.
17 South Carolina.

18 Q. Are you a native of Olanda?

19 A. Well, not far away from Lake City, but
20 I've been living over here about 35 years.

21 Q. You were born and grew up in Lake City?

22 A. Yes, sir.

23 Q. And where did you go to school?

24 A. I went to public school in Lake City.

25 Q. High school?

1 A. Yes, sir. Lake City High School.

2 Q. All right. And have you had any
3 education -- formal education, training type
4 education, in the auto parts business?

5 A. Well, no, sir. Not -- not through no
6 structured class or anything like that. I mean,
7 we've had meetings with other yards and stuff
8 offered, you know, through our lines and stuff,
9 you know.

10 Q. And have you -- since you got out of
11 high school, did you immediately or soon after go
12 into this business -- type business or did you do
13 something else before you founded the Auto Parts
14 -- 301?

15 A. Well, when I was in high school, I
16 started rebuilding wrecked cars, buying cars
17 wrecked and fixing them, and sold some parts off
18 of them, but it kind of led into a full-time
19 thing, you know, around 20 years ago.

20 Q. Okay. Now, where -- explain to us if
21 you would, where do you acquire the inventory for
22 your business, for 301? I'm just going to call
23 it 301, if that's okay -- call your business 301.
24 Is that agreeable for this deposition?

25 A. For me it is, yeah.

1 Q. Okay. Where does 301 get its inventory
2 to sell to people?

3 A. Mostly from two auction companies called
4 IAA and Copart.

5 Q. IAA?

6 A. Yes, sir.

7 Q. And what was the other one?

8 A. Copart. C-O-P-A-R-T.

9 Q. C-O- what?

10 A. P. C-O-P-A-R-T.

11 Q. What is IAA?

12 A. What does it stand for?

13 Q. Well, what does it stand for and where
14 is the company and that sort of thing?

15 A. Well, it stands for Insurance Auto
16 Auctions. I mean, they got -- they have them
17 everywhere. I don't know. They have them in
18 Charleston, Columbia -- all over the United
19 States.

20 Q. Okay. Do you use one in particular or
21 several or where are the ones you use?

22 A. Several.

23 Q. Several. Is there one around Florence?

24 A. No, sir, not in Florence anymore.
25 Columbia and Charleston and -- you know.

1 Q. Okay. Is Columbia and Charleston the
2 closest ones to where you are?

3 A. Yes, sir.

4 Q. Now, where is the other one you
5 mentioned, Copart? Where is that?

6 A. It's also in Charleston and Columbia,
7 and it's nationwide.

8 Q. And where does Copart -- I mean, I
9 imagine, am I correct, that the insurance auto --
10 insurance one that you told us about, is that
11 inventory, cars and parts, that they obtained
12 from when they pay off claims?

13 A. Yes, sir. I don't know of any, you
14 know, parts. It's complete cars, and Copart's
15 the same way. That's what they are.

16 Q. Complete cars?

17 A. Sir?

18 Q. And then, am I correct, when you get the
19 complete car, you sell parts off of it as needed
20 by customers; is that correct?

21 A. Yes, sir.

22 Q. And do you ever sell the whole car --
23 the entire car?

24 A. Very rarely. If somebody came in and
25 wanted one before we processed it, you know, but

1 after it's processed, no, sir.

2 Q. What do you do to process it?

3 A. Well, we take the car in and bring it
4 around to the back. And we try to crank it and
5 listen to it, run it, and check whatever we can
6 check on it while it's running. And -- and then
7 we, you know, drain the fluids out of it and
8 continue then to dismantle it and put the parts
9 in the warehouse.

10 Q. Okay. And do you know of any defects in
11 the -- or make a record of any of the defects in
12 a particular automobile when you bring it in?

13 A. Yes, sir. If there's a defect, you
14 know, in a part that we sell, and -- I mean, you
15 know, if we crank and the motor don't -- you
16 know, if the motor don't sound good or if the
17 motor just got a broke place on it or something
18 like that, we would, you know, put that in our
19 notes. And, you know, if the radio don't work,
20 we would of course cover it, you know, that type
21 of thing.

22 Q. Right. Now, is that the same sort of
23 process for the other company that you acquire
24 inventory from, Coparts? Is it the same process?

25 A. No, sir. They sell the entire car.

1 They just -- you know, I guess the best way to
2 explain it is if you got in a wreck and they
3 totaled your vehicle, then it would wind up at
4 Copart or either IAA to be auctioned off.

5 Q. Does Copart have anything to do with the
6 insurance company -- companies?

7 A. I mean, as far as them owning it?

8 Q. Well, you said when you were dealing
9 with the other one, IAA, that it was -- the stuff
10 originated with insurance company claims paid.
11 And what I'm asking now is: Does the Copart
12 company have anything to do with the insurance
13 industry in that regard?

14 A. Yeah. Both of them get the majority of
15 their vehicles from insurance companies.

16 Q. Okay. That's exactly what I was asking.
17 Now, how do you go about determining -- well,
18 let's just take the case of an engine, like we're
19 dealing with in this case, a couple of engines.

20 When a car comes in, what would your
21 company do to see what, if any, defects there are
22 in an engine of a car?

23 A. Well, as far as what we do, sir, we
24 would just crank it and listen to it, and, you
25 know, most of the time, I would guess 90 percent

1 of these cars are wrecked in the front. And so
2 most of the time the radiator's busted. You
3 don't have water in it. So, you know, you can't
4 let it run but so long before we get hot. So you
5 just try to crank it up and, you know, rev the
6 engine up, check it and listen and make sure it
7 don't have no rattles. Make sure it's not
8 smoking. Make sure it's running good and level,
9 and then, you know, that's what we try to do.

10 Q. Okay. And what do you do if it won't
11 crank or you discover some other defect if it
12 does crank? One-by-one -- let's just take this
13 -- if a car comes in, you try to crank it. It
14 doesn't crank. What do you do about that?

15 A. Well, you know, it's on like a -- it can
16 be generic. It's on a case-by-case basis. If we
17 get a car in that's hit real hard in the
18 computer, you know, in the fuse box area, where
19 we can't get no power to it --

20 Q. Right.

21 A. -- I mean, you know the car was running
22 and driving when it was wrecked, so when we -- we
23 won't crank it. We'll pull it out and put the
24 engine in the computer, and just put in the notes
25 on the bottom that, you know, could not crank,

1 you know.

2 Q. And you sell it in that condition with
3 the notice that it wouldn't run or wouldn't
4 crank?

5 A. Yes, sir. Well, you know, it's -- most
6 of the time, you know, I don't -- I couldn't sit
7 here and tell you that 100 percent of the time
8 that, you know, that question gets answered
9 because we do a six-month warranty, you know.
10 And a lot of times, you know, if it's a shop
11 calling, they'll say, you know, did the motor
12 run? And we got our notes, and we're going to
13 have "ran good" or whatever -- or "couldn't
14 crank." And whatever's in our notes, we tell
15 them, you know, because there's no need to lie
16 about it. We got the warranty, you know.

17 Q. How do you -- well, first, next to this,
18 do you check other parts of the car to see if
19 everything is okay or not okay?

20 A. Well, we try to turn the air conditioner
21 on and check the compressor, and we -- you know,
22 we look at the gauges and, you know, try to make
23 sure that the alternator is charging and, you
24 know, that type of thing. Of course you can't
25 drive it to check the transmission but, you

1 know -- and then the rest of the stuff is just
2 pretty much visually inspected, like the wheels
3 and the lights and that type of thing, you know.

4 Q. And do you see things like fuel lines
5 attached properly and things like that?

6 A. Well, when we strip a car, the normal
7 process for all hoses and lines are cut.

8 Q. Yeah.

9 A. And we don't -- we cut them, and we
10 unplug the wires from the plugs. We cut the
11 hoses, and then when we get the engine out on the
12 table, we go back and we take the hoses that are
13 loose, and we cap the ends of them.

14 Q. Yeah.

15 A. And we don't sell hoses and -- you know,
16 we don't sell that type of stuff with an engine
17 because most of the time it'll get tore or it
18 could get crimped pulling it out or something.
19 So that stuff does not get sold with an engine.
20 It's capped off right at the engine.

21 Q. Okay. I think I understand what you're
22 saying. And when you sell an engine, you sell an
23 engine?

24 A. Yes, sir.

25 Q. All right. And so do you ever sell the

1 whole car?

2 A. Well, like I said, I have occasionally
3 before it's processed, but I very rarely sell the
4 whole car. But I mean, if I can, you know,
5 before it's processed in the computer, I sell one
6 every now and then.

7 Q. All right. Mr. Ard, before I move on,
8 just let me ask you a few things about -- my
9 screen's gone kind of wacky here.

10 Mr. Ard, you are the president and owner
11 of the company, are you not, 301?

12 A. Yes, sir.

13 Q. And how many employees does the company
14 have?

15 A. We probably got around 20. 15-20
16 something like that.

17 Q. And who is next in line in the
18 management structure of the company after you?

19 A. My son.

20 Q. What is his name?

21 A. His name is David Brown Ard, Jr.

22 Q. Okay. And would I be correct in
23 assuming that you get a variety of engines, a
24 variety of cars, just depending on what the
25 source sells or do you limit your acquisition of

1 like engines, for example, and cars to particular
2 kinds or makes of cars? Or do you take all kinds
3 of cars?

4 A. We buy all kinds.

5 Q. Okay. Now, in this particular case, are
6 you familiar with the transaction, I take it, in
7 which two engines were sold? One was initially
8 sold to Mr. Lonnie Hamilton. Are you familiar
9 with that transaction?

10 A. I am since this has been brought up
11 some. I couldn't tell you everything about it,
12 but I just know -- I mean, I know we sold him an
13 engine.

14 Q. Yeah. And we're going to talk to Mr.
15 Timmy Lee after a while. Was he the one who made
16 the sale?

17 A. Yes, sir.

18 Q. Okay. And I gather that he would be
19 able to tell us the details of the transaction;
20 is that correct?

21 A. He should be able to, what he can
22 remember of it. Yes, sir.

23 Q. Okay. Now, let me ask you this -- go
24 back to one of my former questions: Did you know
25 -- going back to this transaction with Mr.

1 Hamilton, and if you don't know, we are going to
2 ask Mr. Lee, and he can perhaps help us if you
3 can't, but was the engine that was first sold to
4 Mr. Hamilton a new engine or a used engine?

5 A. Used.

6 Q. And do you know anything about the
7 mileage condition of the engine when it was sold
8 to him?

9 A. Well, I don't have that information in
10 front of me, but I'm sure we do. I mean, we have
11 it on, you know -- we typically -- if the car
12 will switch on, we get the miles off of it, and
13 we -- you know, we try to crank it, and we tell
14 the customer what we got, you know.

15 Q. Yes, sir. And do you know -- to what
16 extent does your company start to vet the engine,
17 go over the engine, and find out if there are any
18 problems with the engine or defects in the engine
19 before you sell it to a customer?

20 A. Well, like I said before, we just crank
21 it and we -- you know, we try to listen to it for
22 as long as we can, you know, and just check it,
23 you know, the way we know how to check it.

24 I mean, I don't hook it up to gauges and
25 to a computer to check it, and I don't know no

1 one that does that in this business, but you
2 can't let one run but so long with no water in
3 it, you know.

4 Q. And I don't know whether you can tell us
5 this or not, so don't worry if you can't, but do
6 you know how many -- roughly how many different
7 kinds of engines you would deal in at your
8 company, different makes?

9 A. No, sir. I don't know.

10 Q. Don't know. Well, I mean, are there
11 more than 50 or no?

12 A. I mean, when you say 50 different kinds,
13 I mean, do you mean like 50 different makes or do
14 you mean 50 different models or do you mean --
15 you know, sir.

16 Q. I think I mean makes. Like Chevrolet
17 engines -- in this case it was a Kia engine.

18 A. Right. Well, there's probably several.
19 I mean, I'd say probably 10 or 15 different
20 makes, I guess. I mean, I'm guessing at this.

21 Q. That's okay. You've given me an idea.
22 And do you have any way to find out when this
23 engine comes in whether or not it has been
24 subject to any recalls by the manufacturer of the
25 automobile in which the engine was located?

1 A. No, sir. I don't know how to do that.

2 Q. You do not do that?

3 A. No, sir. I don't know how you would --
4 no. I don't know how to do that. No, sir.

5 Q. All right. Well, would I be correct
6 then that when you sell an engine to a customer,
7 as in this case Mr. Hamilton, you would not be
8 able to tell the purchaser whether or not the
9 engine had been subject to a recall; is that
10 correct?

11 A. No, sir. But if he owns the car and he
12 needs an engine, then he ought to know that I
13 guess, but I don't.

14 Q. All right. And you would not have the
15 information nor would you be able to tell a
16 customer whether or not the automobile had a
17 recall?

18 A. No, sir.

19 Q. For any reason, right?

20 A. Sir?

21 Q. All right. I think I understand you to
22 be saying that when you sell an engine to an
23 individual purchaser, you would not be able to
24 give that customer any information concerning
25 whether or not the car, for any reason, had been

1 recalled by the manufacturer.

2 A. You know, not unless it's something
3 that, you know, we happened to just catch, you
4 know, just to know about. As far as researching
5 each particular vehicle, we don't do that, but I
6 mean if -- you know, some things are real common,
7 like the airbags, you know. We know about the
8 airbag recall. That type of thing. We hear
9 about that. But if we -- you know, for whatever
10 reason we don't hear about it, we don't hear
11 about it, you know.

12 Q. Understood. How would you hear about it
13 if you did?

14 A. Well, mechanics. If we have a lot of
15 shops calling for the same type thing, you know,
16 word will kind of spread in the community -- you
17 know, in our community about that type of thing,
18 you know. And sometimes it don't. I mean, if it
19 does, we hear about it then. But if it don't,
20 then we don't hear about it.

21 Q. So it's just whether you hear about it
22 or not?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. Okay. Well, we have been given --
25 (Interruption)

1 (Discussion off the record)

2 Q. (MR. TISDALE) Well, are you aware of
3 the multiple recalls that Kia has made on the
4 type of engine that you sold to Mr. Hamilton?

5 A. No, sir. I haven't heard of any --
6 anything happening around here with one of them.
7 This is the first I've heard of it as far as a
8 fire or anything goes. We sell a lot of those
9 engines, and we've never had no problem like, you
10 know -- this is the first time we've ever heard
11 of a problem like that.

12 Q. Okay. So you are not familiar -- we
13 have listed as exhibits -- we have marked for
14 identification for this deposition recalls that
15 have been issued by Kia. They're in Exhibits 3
16 and 4. We have them there to look at if you
17 wanted to. They are dated various dates where
18 Kia has issued recalls saying that there is a
19 problem with these engines catching on fire --
20 these Kia engines.

21 Am I to understand that you did not have
22 access to any of these recalls that are shown in
23 Exhibits 3 and 4?

24 (Exhibit No. 3 and 4 were marked for
25 identification.)

1 A. I'm not going to tell you that I didn't
2 have access because I got a computer here, but I
3 can tell you I hadn't heard anything about them
4 catching on fire. I mean, I hadn't researched
5 it, and I hadn't heard it.

6 And then, if I'm understanding correct,
7 I didn't know steel would burn. I didn't know
8 steel and aluminum would burn. I thought you had
9 to put gas or something on it to make it burn. I
10 didn't know it would burn. So -- I don't sell
11 gas lines. And when I heard about this, I looked
12 back at the recall, and it was a low pressure
13 faulty fuel line, and I don't sell fuel lines.
14 And there's no way for an engine to burn unless
15 you hook fuel to it, from my understanding. You
16 all might know of a way, but I don't.

17 Q. Sure.

18 A. Okay.

19 Q. Well, have you looked at the recalls
20 that we have given I think your attorney and
21 marked for this deposition?

22 A. I did look at some of them.

23 Q. You did?

24 A. I didn't -- I glanced at it. I saw a
25 bearing issue with the engine seizing up. I saw

1 that, and I saw the fuel line. Yes, sir.

2 Q. Well, what'd you see about the fuel
3 line?

4 A. Sir?

5 Q. You said you saw something about a fuel
6 line?

7 A. Yeah. The low -- I saw where it said
8 the low pressure fuel line cracks on them was a
9 problem.

10 Q. All right. Well, I'm looking at this --
11 I'm looking at a Kia recall dated January 17th,
12 2019.

13 MS. VARNADO: Which exhibit is
14 that, Tom?

15 MR. TISDALE: This is 3, isn't it?

16 MS. PINCKNEY: Exhibit 3, yeah.

17 Ms. VARNADO: Mr. Ard, do you have
18 that Exhibit 3?

19 THE WITNESS: Let me see if I can
20 -- I should. Give me a second. I don't have it
21 -- hold on.

22 MR. TISDALE: I can ask him about
23 it if he can't find it.

24 THE WITNESS: I think I've got it.
25 Give me a -- important safety recall.

1 MR. TISDALE: That's what it has --
2 the page I'm looking at now. And the particular
3 one is dated January 17, 2019.

4 MS. VARNADO: Well, what page
5 number is that?

6 MR. TISDALE: 10 it looks like. Is
7 that 10?

8 MS. VARNADO: There's only eight
9 pages.

10 MR. TISDALE: No, two. It's a
11 recall that's dated January 17, 2019. It doesn't
12 have a page number on it.

13 THE WITNESS: I'm looking now.
14 Dated when now?

15 MR. TISDALE: It's dated -- and it
16 says important safety recall and the recall
17 number is 18V -- as in Victory -- 907 and has a
18 date on it of January 17th, 2019.

19 MS. VARNADO: That is page 6.

20 THE WITNESS: Okay. Kia defect in
21 vehicle -- I see it. Yes, sir. I think I got
22 it.

23 Q. (MR. TISDALE) Okay. And have you ever
24 seen this particular recall before it was given
25 to you for this deposition?

1 A. No, sir.

2 Q. Okay. Well, in this if you just look at
3 this page with me for a minute. It says that --
4 about halfway down the page -- Kia will inspect
5 and, if necessary, replace the high pressure fuel
6 pipe at no cost for parts or labor to you. And
7 it says Kia has advised its authorized dealers to
8 inspect the connections of the high pressure fuel
9 pipe to the fuel pump outlet for fuel leaking.
10 If leaking fuel is detected, the fuel pipe will
11 be replaced and so forth.

12 So my question to you about this, Mr.
13 Ard, would be: When you -- before you sold this
14 automobile to Mr. Hamilton -- this automobile
15 engine to Mr. Hamilton, did you all inspect the
16 fuel lines to see if there was any defect coming
17 into the engine from the fuel line or did you
18 inspect any fuel lines at all?

19 A. Well, it's like I told you before, I
20 didn't inspect the fuel lines because I don't
21 sell the fuel lines.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. The fuel line don't go with the engine.

24 Q. Would I be correct in saying that your
25 testimony is -- correct me if I'm wrong -- that

1 when you sold this engine to Mr. Hamilton, it had
2 no fuel line?

3 A. No, sir.

4 Q. No, sir it didn't have a fuel line?

5 A. It didn't have a fuel line, no, sir.

6 Q. You don't sell fuel lines with engines?

7 A. No, sir.

8 Q. Okay. And you're not aware of any
9 problem with fuel lines as described in this
10 recall notice by Kia?

11 A. Sir?

12 Q. Am I correct in assuming that you knew
13 nothing about this recall notice from Kia on this
14 automobile engine?

15 A. No, sir. I didn't know anything about
16 it. I mean, like I said, if we got the car out
17 there on the lift we have mechanics there and an
18 inventory guy that -- we have two sets of eyes on
19 it, and if he cranks it -- if it was leaking gas,
20 we would've immediately switched it off to keep a
21 fire from starting. So apparently there wasn't
22 no crack in it, you know. And if it does have a
23 crack in it and it's leaking gas, normally the
24 engine would be stalling or it'd be skipping from
25 missing, you know.

1 Q. All right. What you just said, I want
2 to ask you -- you okay?

3 A. Sir?

4 Q. Are you all right?

5 A. Oh, yes, sir.

6 Q. What you just said is something I wanted
7 to ask you about. So you're saying that when
8 your people take in an engine like the one we
9 here, they crank it up as you said several times,
10 and if there is any fuel leak, they cut it off
11 right away so that the engine will not catch on
12 fire; is that correct?

13 A. Yes, sir.

14 Q. And so would it be true then that if the
15 fuel line attached to the engine -- to Mr.
16 Hamilton's engine, had a leak, you would have
17 known about it?

18 A. If what now?

19 Q. If the engine that you sold to Mr.
20 Hamilton had a leaking fuel line coming to it
21 when you took it in to your company, your people
22 would have known that and had seen it and would
23 have detached that fuel line when the engine was
24 sold; is that correct?

25 MS. VARNADO: Objection.

1 A. Well, I don't understand.

2 Q. When you sold Mr. -- okay. I'll
3 clarify. When Mr. Hamilton -- when you sold --
4 your company sold the engine to Mr. Hamilton, no
5 fuel line was attached to the engine, was it?

6 A. Right.

7 Q. Okay. Now, if you had gone to your
8 computer, as you said, you could have discovered,
9 could you not, that Kia engines had been
10 recalled; is that correct?

11 A. Well, I guess I could've, you know.
12 But, I mean, there's a lot I could do on the
13 computer if I went to it to check, you know. I
14 reckon I could see why it rained in California,
15 but I don't have time to go check everything, you
16 know.

17 Q. I'm just asking you -- I'm just asking
18 you what your standard practice is.

19 A. Yeah.

20 Q. And so you would not under ordinary
21 circumstances go in and check to see if there had
22 been any recalls on an engine in a car that you
23 were going to sell to a customer?

24 A. Right.

25 Q. Okay. But I also I understand you to

1 say that you could do that -- that that
2 information was accessible to you on a computer
3 if you decided to check it; is that correct?

4 MS. VARNADO: Objection.

5 A. I mean, I guess it is. I don't know
6 that. I mean, I'm just saying it's on a computer
7 right now, and I found it. But -- I mean, after
8 it was brought to my attention. But, I mean, I
9 wouldn't know really where to start and know if
10 this -- if it's legitimate or not. There's so
11 much stuff on a computer, you know. I don't
12 know. I mean --

13 Q. Well, I think my question is pretty
14 simple. I think. I mean, I don't want to
15 complicate it, but what I am hearing you say, and
16 you tell me if this is wrong, that when this
17 engine that Mr. Hamilton ended up buying had been
18 subject to recall, although you did not know it
19 at the time, you could've found out whether it
20 was subject to a recall so you could tell Mr.
21 Hamilton when he bought it, could you not?

22 MS. VARNADO: Objection.

23 Q. Excuse me, Mr. Ard. Did you understand
24 my question?

25 A. Yeah, when she objected, I don't know if

1 I'm supposed to answer that or not.

2 MS. VARNADO: Yeah. Go ahead and
3 answer.

4 A. All right. This is how I'm going to
5 answer this question --

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. -- if Kia had a recall, okay. And this
8 recall you're talking about now was dated in
9 2019.

10 Q. Yes, sir.

11 A. On an engine that came out of a 2012
12 car.

13 Q. Yes, sir.

14 A. All right. Well, if I bought the car in
15 2013 when it was a year old, there wouldn't be no
16 information about a recall on the computer
17 because the recall didn't come out until 2019.
18 So am I supposed to check recalls every day and
19 see if a new one comes out on every engine and
20 every car and every fuel pump, every
21 transmission? I mean, you're asking me something
22 that don't make any sense, and I'm not going to
23 answer it any farther than that. That's as far
24 as I'm going to answer.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. Now, I'm not trying to be rude, but
2 you're trying to corner me into something
3 that's -- you know. I mean, I can't check it
4 every day to see when the recall comes out. I
5 mean, I can't do that. I don't have enough
6 people here to do that, and I don't know how many
7 it would take. So that's really all I'm going to
8 comment on that.

9 Q. All right. Mr. Ard, I really don't --
10 this is a very simple question, I think, and I'll
11 try to make it simple. And I'm not asking you to
12 complicate it beyond the question, unless you
13 want to. But am I correct or is it true that
14 when the cars come into your business, 301, that
15 you will take parts out of it, such as an engine
16 -- let me -- since we're talking about an engine
17 here, let's let me limit it to that.

18 If a car comes into your business and
19 you decide to sell an engine off of a particular
20 car, 301 does nothing to determine whether or not
21 the engine has been subject to a recall?

22 A. Well, I feel like I've already answered
23 that question, and that's all I want -- I mean,
24 that's all I've got to say about it.

25 Q. It just requires a yes or no answer.

1 Either you do or you don't. Are you able to tell
2 me whether you do or don't?

3 THE WITNESS: Ms. Christie, am I
4 okay to say I've had -- you know, I've answered
5 enough of that question?

6 MS. VARNADO: Just go ahead and
7 tell him the answer to the question, which I
8 believe the question is do you all check for
9 recalls on engines before you sell them?

10 MR. TISDALE: That's exactly what
11 I'm asking.

12 A. No, because us or nobody else has the
13 staff to do it.

14 Q. All right. Did you tell me yes or no,
15 you do or don't?

16 A. Well, I did. I just told you.

17 Q. What'd you tell me?

18 A. I told you no because we don't have the
19 staff.

20 Q. You just answered my question. Thank
21 you very much. That's good. Now, I'm going to
22 take that down the line a little bit.

23 Is it correct then, based on your
24 answer, that when Mr. Hamilton bought this engine
25 from 301, he was not informed as to whether or

1 not the engine had been subject to any recalls?

2 A. Probably not.

3 Q. All right. You said probably. Can you
4 think of any circumstances where it would be
5 different?

6 A. Well, I mean, if I knew there -- you
7 know. No. Not on an engine fire for a hose that
8 I didn't sell a hose, no.

9 Q. Okay. I think we've kind of covered
10 that subject, and I appreciate your answers to my
11 questions.

12 Now, you have said that you've sold
13 engines and other parts of cars of several makes.
14 I've forgotten the number you gave me, but
15 several.

16 Are you able to give us an estimate of
17 what percentage, roughly, of automobile parts you
18 sell come from Kia automobiles?

19 A. No, sir.

20 Q. Okay. Do you know what is the one that
21 -- are you able to tell us what cars do you sell
22 mostly -- cars parts do you sell most of?

23 A. No, sir.

24 Q. You can't tell us that?

25 A. No.

1 Q. You don't keep any records of the cars
2 coming into your place?

3 A. Yes, sir.

4 Q. But you don't know what they are in
5 numbers of cars?

6 A. No, sir.

7 Q. You just don't keep a record of that.
8 Have you had any knowledge of fires being
9 prevalent in Kia engines?

10 A. No, sir.

11 Q. When did you first learn that there was
12 a possibility of fires occurring in Kia engines?

13 A. When I got this --

14 MS. VARNADO: Objection.

15 Q. Sir?

16 A. When this case came up, and still hadn't
17 heard about it no more.

18 Q. All right. And in the case of Mr.
19 Hamilton's engine, for -- as an example, before a
20 individual buys an engine and before it's shipped
21 to him, to the purchaser, what do you do to test
22 it, if anything?

23 A. Sir, I have answered this question
24 already. I mean, two times.

25 Q. Well, forgive me for not knowing -- not

1 remembering what you said. I am asking now about
2 -- like, in this case, Mr. Hamilton bought the
3 engine. It was taken by your company I think to
4 Charleston for installation.

5 What did you do -- 301 do to test that
6 engine before it was shipped to Charleston?

7 A. The same thing we do to all of them. If
8 it'll crank, we crank it, and we listen to it and
9 that's what we did. If we couldn't get it to
10 crank, we didn't.

11 Q. Okay. Have you had a situation come up
12 in your business of any other problems with Kia
13 engines after selling them to customers?

14 A. I mean, it's possible. We've had
15 trouble with an engine, but, I mean, nothing
16 comes to mind. But I wouldn't say we haven't,
17 but nothing comes to mind.

18 Q. How would you find out whether you have
19 or not?

20 A. I mean, I don't know.

21 Q. Would that information be available to
22 you?

23 A. I wouldn't think so.

24 Q. Okay. What have you done to -- what
25 have you done to learn about or educate yourself

1 about what happened with regard to the two
2 engines that were sold to Mr. Hamilton that this
3 matter is about?

4 A. What do you mean now? Tell me --
5 explain -- break that down a little bit.

6 Q. Are you familiar or do you know about
7 the claim of Mr. Hamilton for problems that he
8 had with two engines that he bought from you for
9 his Kia Optima?

10 A. I don't remember what was wrong with the
11 first engine. I don't -- I don't remember, no,
12 sir.

13 Q. All right. But are you -- but you are
14 aware, I understand, that there was a problem
15 with the engine?

16 A. Yeah, I don't know what the problem was.
17 I don't know.

18 Q. All right. Will Mr. Lee know about
19 that?

20 A. I think so. He may know. He may know
21 what he was told, yeah.

22 Q. Well, he's the one who replaced the
23 engine, isn't he?

24 A. Yes, sir. He sold it to him.

25 Q. He would not have replaced the engine at

1 no cost to Mr. Hamilton if the engine had not
2 been defective, would he?

3 A. Well, the normal practice is it's
4 supposed to be an ASE certified shop that put it
5 in. So, you know, we took it to this man for
6 this guy, and he's -- like I said, he's a hundred
7 miles away, and if he found a problem with it,
8 you know, normally we take their word for it, you
9 know, if he don't feel comfortable with putting
10 it in.

11 I don't know if it was an issue where he
12 put the engine in and had a problem or he saw
13 something on the engine he didn't like or -- I
14 mean, I don't know. I think Timmy will know that
15 answer, but I don't know. But, you know, we
16 typically will take the shop's word for it. If
17 he puts it in and says the engine was making a
18 fuss or knocking or he went down the road and
19 something happened to it or something like that,
20 we typically take their word. Whatever they
21 said, we'll send them another engine to make them
22 happy.

23 Q. Right. And take the old engine back?
24 The one --

25 A. Yeah.

1 Q. -- you replaced?

2 A. Yes, sir.

3 Q. Okay. So your testimony is then that
4 you don't know what was wrong with the engine, if
5 anything?

6 A. That's right. I mean, I can't say. I
7 -- honestly, I don't know.

8 Q. Okay. How long has Mr. Lee worked for
9 your company?

10 A. I don't know. 10, 12 years maybe. I'm
11 not sure.

12 Q. And when the car comes in, you told me
13 about what you all do to see if the engine will
14 crank, and very little else, as I understand it,
15 other than seeing if it will crank or is making
16 noise of some sort. Who does that? Who checks
17 that, the engines when they come in -- the cars
18 when they come in?

19 A. We have a mechanic that strips in the
20 back and a guy that inventories in the back
21 and -- those two.

22 Q. When you say strips, what does that
23 mean?

24 A. One guy actually, you know, puts the car
25 on the lift and cranks it and the inventory guy

1 goes out and listens to it, you know.

2 Q. Okay. And so two people work in the
3 shop that do that?

4 A. Yes, sir.

5 Q. All right. Now, I understand that you
6 did not do any research to see if the engine that
7 you sold to Mr. Hamilton had been subject to a
8 recall, but if you decided to do that and check
9 that, who in the company would be the person
10 checking that?

11 A. I guess it would have to be me. I mean,
12 I don't know how you go about checking it and at
13 what point in time. I guess it would be me.

14 Q. Okay. Give me just one second. I'm
15 trying to save a little time here.

16 Now, Mr. Ard, have you had any contact
17 at all with Mr. Lonnie Hamilton in connection
18 with the matter of his purchase of the two
19 engines from you?

20 A. If I do, I don't remember. If I talked
21 to him over the phone, I could have, but I don't
22 remember talking to him over the phone. But it's
23 possible. We talk to a lot of people, and I just
24 -- I don't remember.

25 Q. I understand. Now, are you aware that

1 the second engine caught on fire and burned the
2 car up?

3 MS. VARNADO: Objection.

4 Q. Mr. Ard?

5 A. Well, I'll tell you, what I'm aware of
6 is the man called down here and wanted to bring
7 the engine back. So, you know, I'm aware of
8 that. So, you know, that's all he wanted to do
9 at that particular time was bring the engine back
10 and get his money back for the engine.

11 And from my understanding at that
12 particular time, the engine was fine. Now, I
13 don't know. I don't know what burnt, where it
14 burnt. I still haven't even saw a burnt engine.
15 I mean, I don't know. Have you seen the engine?

16 Q. I don't think I have.

17 A. I hadn't either. So, I mean, we really
18 don't know if there is a burnt engine. Me and
19 you don't know because I hadn't seen it and you
20 hadn't seen it, and I don't know if there is a
21 burnt engine.

22 Q. Well, have you seen the car?

23 A. No, sir.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. Have you?

1 Q. No.

2 A. Okay.

3 Q. Now -- but I'm not giving my deposition
4 right now and I'm not under oath, but I'll be
5 glad to take an oath if you all need it on that
6 question.

7 Well, let's just be sure I understand
8 everything about what you know about the
9 transaction with Mr. Hamilton. First of all, I'm
10 just looking at a photograph of the car that was
11 burned up with the engine in it, the second
12 engine you sent him. And I don't know how to
13 show it to you, but I have it here, and it is
14 quite apparent that the automobile has been
15 burned up. And it looks like the fire is under
16 the hood.

17 A. Can you hold it up? Can you just hold
18 it up for me? I hadn't saw anything. A little
19 higher.

20 Q. Can you see it?

21 A. Yes, sir. I see.

22 Q. You see it?

23 A. Yes, sir. I see it.

24 Q. Would you agree with my assessment that
25 it appears that the car is burned and that the

1 fire is specifically under the hood?

2 A. It appears that way. Yes, sir.

3 Q. We agree?

4 A. Yes, sir.

5 Q. Okay. Now, just for the record here,
6 and I don't have a whole lot more to ask you
7 about, but what I'm hearing -- and just confirm
8 this for me -- you were not -- were you
9 personally involved in the sale of either one of
10 these two engines to Mr. Hamilton?

11 A. No, sir. Not personally. No, sir.

12 Q. Okay. And was that all handled by Mr.
13 Lee?

14 A. Yes, sir.

15 Q. Okay. And when I said sale, I know you
16 all sent the replacement, so it really wasn't a
17 sale of the second engine.

18 When the first engine failed, the
19 company replaced that with the second engine; is
20 that correct?

21 A. Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

22 Q. With the second engine?

23 A. Yes, sir.

24 Q. There might have been some related costs
25 that he paid, but -- all right. And when you

1 sent him the second engine, do you know who would
2 have vetted that engine to be sure it was okay
3 and in working order, the second engine? Would
4 that have been Mr. Lee or somebody else?

5 A. Who would've done what now?

6 Q. Insured that the second engine was
7 operable and okay for installation in Mr.
8 Hamilton's Kia automobile.

9 A. Well, I mean, like I said, we try to put
10 it on a lift and we try to crank it and see if
11 it'll run. Mr. Lee don't have anything to do
12 with that.

13 Q. Okay. So when Mr. Hamilton called or
14 whatever he did to get in touch with you to
15 inform you, or whoever called you, and said the
16 first engine had failed, who would make the
17 selection of the second engine to send to him?
18 Who would pick it out of the inventory?

19 A. Well, Mr. Lee probably. I mean, it
20 depends on if, you know, we had four engines on
21 the shelf, you know. I don't know which one, you
22 know. I can't say that for sure. I mean, if we
23 had one then there wasn't but one other one to
24 get, but if we had four, you know, it's possible,
25 you know, that he could have picked one out of

1 the four. Or if three of them had within 5,000
2 of the same miles or whatever they talked about,
3 it might have got, you know.

4 Q. I understand. You've already said
5 several times, which I appreciate, that when the
6 engine first comes in, you check to see if it'll
7 crank, then you put it in inventory, right?

8 A. Yes, sir. Well, if it'll crank. If it
9 won't, we put that in our notes and put the
10 engine on the shelf and tell the customer that we
11 couldn't start it.

12 Q. Okay. And that's what you do when you
13 take it in. Now, when you sell it, do you do any
14 further testing on it to see what kind of shape
15 it's in?

16 A. Normally our procedure is we take it out
17 the rack and we put a wrench on it to make sure
18 it turns because sometimes if they sit on the
19 shelf for very long they stick. And make sure
20 that they turn --

21 Q. Cranks up?

22 A. Yes, sir. Make sure they turn and then
23 we wash -- we pressure wash it and clean it up
24 and put all the caps on it where the hoses went,
25 you know, and send it off.

1 Q. All right. And that's all that is done
2 though, nothing further than that?

3 A. Well, other than -- at that point, yes,
4 sir. That's all I can think of. I mean --

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. Well, we put heat tabs on it at that
7 point to make sure -- you know, in case the
8 engine got -- ran hot, the heat tabs would melt,
9 you know.

10 Q. What's a heat tab?

11 A. That's a little thing about the size of
12 a dime that you put epoxy on and stick it on the
13 block -- on the engine block in two or three
14 different places. And if the engine reaches a
15 certain temperature, those things will fall off,
16 and that way you'll know if -- because you can't
17 warranty engines that's been ran hot, you know.

18 Q. Are these -- what'd you call them, a
19 tab?

20 A. Heat tab. Yes, sir.

21 Q. Okay. And is that put on while the
22 engine is on the shelf? Before --

23 A. Well, normally we put it on when we sell
24 the engine. We take it down off the rack, and
25 after we wash it and clean it up, we put the heat

1 tabs on.

2 Q. Right. And then you check -- get the
3 engine running to see if those tabs heat up or is
4 that for later?

5 A. We put the tabs on the engine when it's
6 going out. It's not in the car.

7 Q. Right. And when is it tested to see if
8 those tabs get hot? When is that discovered?

9 A. Those tabs are put on in -- like if I
10 sold you an engine and I put the heat tabs on it
11 when it went to you. And then, say, two months
12 down the road you come back and say your motor's
13 locked up.

14 Q. Right. Due to --

15 A. We can look at that engine and tell if
16 you ran it hot.

17 Q. Due to heat?

18 A. Yeah. From water temperature inside the
19 block. If it ran hot, that way it would melt
20 those tabs. It would melt the heat tabs and they
21 would come off, you know.

22 Q. And you said that's from water -- lack
23 of cooling in the engine?

24 A. Yes, sir.

25 Q. All right.

1 A. So say if, you know, you had a bad water
2 hose or your water hose fell off and the engine
3 ran hot, you know, we couldn't replace that
4 engine because you neglected to fix your water
5 hose is what I'm getting at.

6 Q. I understand. But that would have
7 nothing to do with the fires in the engine, would
8 it?

9 A. No, sir. Nothing at all.

10 Q. No connection. Okay. Now, are you
11 aware that there's a class-action lawsuit
12 involving Kia engines pending the settlement, in
13 which a settlement has been made to pay all of
14 these people who have these Kia engines that have
15 caught on fire for damages they've incurred?

16 A. I was aware when I got these papers and
17 read them, but not until then.

18 Q. Okay.

19 MR. TISDALE: Just for the record,
20 notice of the proposed class-action settlement is
21 **Exhibit 5** in the exhibits that we submitted.

22 Q. But you weren't aware of that until this
23 lawsuit started?

24 (**Exhibit No. 5** was marked for
25 identification.)

1 A. Right.

2 Q. Is that right?

3 A. That's right.

4 Q. Okay. Have you had any other fire
5 problems in the engines you've sold involving Kia
6 engines other than Mr. Hamilton's car?

7 A. No, sir.

8 Q. Have not. But --

9 A. I don't know of any engine we've ever
10 had a fire claim over.

11 Q. This is the only one you've sold that
12 you know of that has caught on fire; is that
13 right?

14 MS. VARNADO: Objection.

15 A. As far as I know, no.

16 Q. That's what I said. That you -- if
17 something has happened.

18 A. Of any kind of engine.

19 Q. Sir?

20 A. Of any kind of engine.

21 Q. Any kind?

22 A. Yeah. Most people know, you know, that
23 steel won't burn unless you pour something on it,
24 you know.

25 Q. Correct. Now, are you still selling Kia

1 engines?

2 A. Yes, sir.

3 MR. TISDALE: Okay. All right.

4 Would you give us a minute, Christie, and just
5 let us step out of the room just a minute and see
6 if we're through with this thing?

7 MS. VARNADO: That's fine.

8 MR. TISDALE: Won't take but a
9 minute.

10 (Recess.)

11 MR. TISDALE: Christie, can you
12 hear me?

13 MS. VARNADO: Yes, I can hear you.

14 MR. TISDALE: We don't have any
15 further questions.

16 MS. VARNADO: Okay.

17 MR. TISDALE: And, of course, if
18 you would like to ask him any questions,
19 certainly. Please proceed.

20 MS. VARNADO: That's all right. I
21 don't have any questions.

22 MR. TISDALE: Very good.

23 MS. VARNADO: Yeah, but let's just
24 make sure -- the only exhibits you used for Mr.
25 Ard's deposition was Exhibit 3 and then you

1 referenced Exhibit 5?

2 MR. TISDALE: Is that right, Sarah?

3 MS. PINCKNEY: Correct.

4 MR. TISDALE: I believe that's
5 correct.

6 MS. VARNADO: Okay. And then you
7 held up that picture of the car.

8 MR. TISDALE: Yes.

9 MS. VARNADO: Can we mark that as
10 an exhibit?

11 MR. TISDALE: That's not marked as
12 an exhibit.

13 MS. VARNADO: I'm sorry?

14 MR. TISDALE: That's not marked as
15 an exhibit for this deposition. Do you have a
16 copy of it?

17 MS. PINCKNEY: She does.

18 MS. VARNADO: Well, since he -- it
19 was talked about, I would like it to be marked as
20 an exhibit.

21 MR. TISDALE: Be glad to. What
22 number would it be?

23 MS. PINCKNEY: 6.

24 MR. TISDALE: We'd be glad to mark
25 it.

1 MS. VARNADO: Thank you.

2 MR. TISDALE: We'll mark it Exhibit
3 6 for the record.

4 (Exhibit No. 6 was marked for
5 identification.)

6 (The deposition was concluded at 11:13.)

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1 CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER
2 STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
3 COUNTY OF KERSHAW

4 I, RACHAEL CLARK, Certified Verbatim
5 Reporter and Notary Public for the State of South
6 Carolina at Large, do hereby certify that the
7 witness in the foregoing deposition was by me
8 duly sworn to testify to the truth, the whole
9 truth and nothing but the truth in the
10 within-entitled cause; that said deposition was
11 taken at the time and location therein stated;
12 that the testimony of the witness and all
13 objections made at the time of the examination
14 were recorded by me and were thereafter
15 transcribed by computer-aided transcription; that
16 the foregoing is a full, complete and true record
17 of the testimony of the witness and of all
18 objections made at the time of the examination;
19 and that the witness was given an opportunity to
20 read and correct said deposition and to subscribe
21 the same.

22 Should the signature of the witness not
23 be affixed to the deposition, the witness shall
24 not have availed himself/herself of the
25 opportunity to sign or the signature has been
waived.

26 I further certify that I am neither
27 related to nor counsel for any party to the cause
28 pending or interested in the events thereof.

29 Witness my hand, I have hereunto affixed
30 my official seal on January 22, 2021 at Kershaw
31 County, South Carolina.

32

33

34

35 RACHAEL CLARK
36 CERTIFIED VERBATIM REPORTER
37 CVR (South Carolina)
38 My Commission expires
39 September 23, 2030

40

41

42

WORD INDEX

< 1 >

10 1:15 18:19

24:6, 7 38:10

10:00 1:18**100** 13:7**105** 2:5**11:13** 51:6**12** 38:10**15** 18:19**15-20** 15:15**17** 24:3, 11**17th** 23:11 24:18**18V** 24:17

< 2 >

20 5:14 6:13 7:19
15:15**200** 2:9**2012** 30:11**2013** 30:15**2019** 23:12 24:3, 11,
18 30:9, 17**2019-CP-10-06567**
1:9**2020** 1:15**2021** 52:17**2030** 52:22**21** 3:9, 10**22** 52:17**23** 52:22**29114** 6:16**29401** 2:5, 9**29405** 1:23

< 3 >

3 3:9 21:15, 23, 24
23:15, 16, 18 49:25**301** 1:9 4:9 5:10

6:5 7:14, 22, 23

8:1 15:11 31:14,

20 32:25 35:5

301's 4:18**3302** 6:16**35** 6:20**38** 2:9

< 4 >

4 3:3, 10 21:16, 23,
24**47** 3:11

< 5 >

5 3:11 47:21, 24

50:1

5,000 44:1**50** 18:11, 12, 13, 14**51** 3:12**52** 3:5

< 6 >

6 3:12 24:19

50:23 51:3, 4

< 8 >

843-762-6294 1:24

< 9 >

90 11:25**907** 24:17**9-1-1** 5:23

< A >

able 16:19, 21 19:8,
15, 23 32:1 33:16,
21**access** 21:22 22:2**accessible** 29:2**acquire** 7:21 10:23**acquisition** 15:25**address** 5:18, 20
6:15**advised** 25:7**affixed** 52:13, 16**ago** 6:13 7:19**agree** 41:24 42:3**agreeable** 7:24**ahead** 30:2 32:6**air** 13:20**airbag** 20:8**airbags** 20:7**alternator** 13:23**aluminum** 22:8**answer** 30:1, 3, 5,
23, 24 31:25 32:7,
24 37:15**answered** 13:8

31:22 32:4, 20

34:23

answers 33:10**anymore** 8:24**anytime** 5:2**apparent** 41:14**apparently** 26:21**appears** 41:25 42:2**appreciate** 4:11

33:10 44:5

ARD 1:2, 15 4:1, 6

5:9 6:4 15:7, 10,

21 23:17 25:13

29:23 31:9 39:16

40:4

Ard's 49:25**area** 12:18**ASE** 37:4**asking** 4:7, 10

11:11, 16 28:17

30:21 31:11 32:11

35:1

assessment 41:24**ASSOCIATES** 1:23**assuming** 15:23

26:12

attached 14:5

27:15 28:5

attention 29:8**attorney** 4:18 6:2

22:20

auction 8:3**auctioned** 11:4**Auctions** 8:16**authorized** 25:7**AUTO** 1:9 5:10

6:5, 7 7:4, 13 8:15

9:9

automobile 10:12

18:25 19:16 25:14

26:14 33:17 41:14

43:8

automobiles 33:18**available** 35:21**availed** 52:13**aware** 21:2 26:8

36:14 39:25 40:5,

7 47:11, 16, 22

< B >

back 10:4 14:12

16:24, 25 22:12

37:23 38:20 40:7,

9, 10 46:12

bad 47:1**based** 32:23**basis** 12:16**bearing** 22:25**BEHALF** 2:3, 7**believe** 32:8 50:4**best** 11:1**beyond** 31:12**bit** 6:5 32:22 36:5**block** 45:13 46:19**born** 6:21**bottom** 12:25**bought** 29:21 30:14

32:24 35:2 36:8

box 5:21 12:18**break** 4:15 36:5**BRIAN** 1:2, 15 4:1**bring** 10:3, 12 40:6,
9**Broad** 2:5, 9**broke** 10:17**brought** 4:8 16:10
29:8**Brown** 15:21**burn** 22:7, 8, 9, 10,
14 48:23**burned** 40:1 41:11,
15, 25**burnt** 40:13, 14, 18,
21**business** 5:13 6:5,
12, 15 7:4, 12, 22, 23

18:1 31:14, 18

35:12

busted 12:2**buy** 6:8 16:4**buying** 7:16 29:17**buys** 34:20

< C >

California 28:14**call** 7:22, 23 45:18**called** 8:3 40:6

43:13, 15 calling 13:11 20:15 cap 14:13 capped 14:20 caps 44:24 car 9:19, 22, 23 10:3, 25 11:20, 22 12:13, 17, 21 13:18 14:6 15:1, 4 17:11 19:11, 25 26:16 28:22 30:12, 14, 20 31:18, 20 38:12, 24 40:2, 22 41:10, 25 46:6 48:6 50:7 CAROLINA 1:1 6:17 52:1, 4, 17, 21 cars 6:8 7:16 9:11, 14, 16 12:1 15:24 16:1, 2, 3 31:14 33:13, 21, 22 34:1, 5 38:17 CASE 1:9 11:18, 19 16:5 18:17 19:7 34:16, 18 35:2 45:7 case-by-case 12:16 catch 20:3 27:11 catching 21:19 22:4 caught 40:1 47:15 48:12 cause 52:6, 15 certain 45:15 certainly 49:19 CERTIFICATE 3:5 52:1 CERTIFIED 1:22 37:4 52:2, 20 certify 52:4, 15 charging 13:23 CHARLESTON 1:2, 23 2:5, 9 8:18, 25 9:1, 6 35:4, 6 check 10:5, 6 12:6 13:18, 21, 25 17:22, 23, 25 28:13, 15, 21 29:3 30:18 31:3 32:8 39:8 44:6 46:2 checking 39:10, 12	checks 38:16 Chevrolet 18:16 Christie 32:3 49:4, 11 CHRISTINE 2:8 circumstances 28:21 33:4 City 6:19, 21, 24 7:1 claim 4:8 36:7 48:10 claims 9:12 11:10 clarified 4:11 clarify 28:3 CLARK 1:22, 23 52:2, 20 Class 3:11 7:6 class-action 47:11, 20 clean 44:23 45:25 closest 9:2 C-O 8:9 Columbia 8:18, 25 9:1, 6 come 30:17 31:14 33:18 35:11 38:17, 18 46:12, 21 comes 11:20 12:13 18:23 30:19 31:4, 18 35:16, 17 38:12 44:6 comfortable 37:9 coming 25:16 27:20 34:2 comment 31:8 Commission 52:21 COMMON 1:1 20:6 community 20:16, 17 companies 8:3 11:6, 15 COMPANION 2:8 company 4:22 5:12 6:6, 8 8:14 10:23 11:6, 10, 12, 21 15:11, 13, 18 17:16 18:8 27:21 28:4 35:3 38:9 39:9 42:19	complete 9:14, 16, 19 52:9 complicate 29:15 31:12 compressor 13:21 computer 12:18, 24 15:5 17:25 22:2 28:8, 13 29:2, 6, 11 30:16 computer-aided 52:9 concerning 19:24 concluded 51:6 condition 13:2 17:7 conditioner 13:20 confirm 42:7 connection 39:17 47:10 connections 25:8 contact 39:16 content 4:24 continue 10:8 conversation 4:25 cooling 46:23 Copart 8:4, 8 9:5, 8 11:4, 5, 11 C-O-P-A-R-T 8:8, 10 Coparts 10:24 Copart's 9:14 copy 50:16 corner 31:2 correct 9:9, 18, 20 15:22 16:20 19:5, 10 22:6 25:24, 25 26:12 27:12, 24 28:10 29:3 31:13 32:23 42:20 48:25 50:3, 5 52:11 cost 25:6 37:1 costs 42:24 could've 28:11 29:19 counsel 52:15 COUNTY 1:2 52:2, 17 couple 11:19 course 5:7 10:20 13:24 49:17 COURT 1:1	cover 10:20 covered 33:9 crack 26:22, 23 cracks 23:8 crank 10:4, 15 11:24 12:5, 11, 12, 13, 14, 23, 25 13:4, 14 17:13, 20 27:9 35:8, 10 38:14, 15 43:10 44:7, 8 cranks 26:19 38:25 44:21 crimped 14:18 CULBREATH 1:5 customer 17:14, 19 19:6, 16, 24 28:23 44:10 customers 9:20 35:13 cut 14:7, 9, 10 27:10 CVR 1:22 52:21 < D > damages 47:15 DATE 1:15 24:18 dated 21:17 23:11 24:3, 11, 14, 15 30:8 dates 21:17 David 15:21 day 30:18 31:4 deal 18:7 dealers 25:7 dealing 11:8, 19 DECEMBER 1:15 decide 31:19 decided 29:3 39:8 defect 10:13 12:11 24:20 25:16 defective 37:2 defects 10:10, 11 11:21 17:18 Defendant 1:12 2:7 deliver 6:9 depending 15:24 depends 43:20 DEPONENT 1:15 DEPOSITION 1:2 4:14, 20 7:24 21:14 22:21 24:25
--	---	--	--

41:3 49:25 50:15
 51:6 52:5, 6, 11, 13
described 26:9
DESCRIPTION 3:8
detached 27:23
details 16:19
detected 25:10
determine 31:20
determining 11:17
different 18:6, 8, 12,
 13, 14, 19 33:5
 45:14
dime 45:12
discover 12:11
discovered 28:8
 46:8
Discussion 21:1
dismantle 10:8
drain 10:7
drive 13:25
driving 12:22
Due 46:14, 17
duly 4:2 52:5

< E >
earlier 4:13
educate 35:25
education 7:3, 4
eight 24:8
either 11:4 32:1
 40:17 42:9
employees 15:13
ended 29:17
ends 14:13
engine 11:18, 22
 12:6, 24 14:11, 16,
 19, 20, 22, 23 16:13
 17:3, 4, 7, 16, 17, 18
 18:17, 23, 25 19:6, 9,
 12, 22 21:4 22:14,
 25 25:15, 17, 23
 26:1, 14, 24 27:8, 11,
 15, 16, 19, 23 28:4, 5,
 22 29:17 30:11, 19
 31:15, 16, 19, 21
 32:24 33:1, 7
 34:19, 20 35:3, 6, 15
 36:11, 15, 23, 25
 37:1, 12, 13, 17, 21,
 23 38:4, 13 39:6

40:1, 7, 9, 10, 12, 14,
 15, 18, 21 41:11, 12
 42:17, 18, 19, 22
 43:1, 2, 3, 6, 16, 17
 44:6, 10 45:8, 13, 14,
 22, 24 46:3, 5, 10, 15,
 23 47:2, 4, 7 48:9,
 18, 20
engines 11:19
 15:23 16:1, 7 18:7,
 17 21:9, 19, 20 26:6
 28:9 32:9 33:13
 34:9, 12 35:13
 36:2, 8 38:17
 39:19 42:10 43:20
 45:17 47:12, 14
 48:5, 6 49:1
entire 5:15 9:23
 10:25
entitled 4:21, 24 5:1
epoxy 45:12
estimate 33:16
events 52:16
exactly 11:16 32:10
EXAMINATION
 3:2 4:4 52:8, 10
examined 4:2
example 16:1 34:19
Excuse 29:23
Exhibit 21:24
 23:13, 16, 18 47:21,
 24 49:25 50:1, 10,
 12, 15, 20 51:2, 4
EXHIBITS 3:7
 21:13, 15, 23 47:21
 49:24
expires 52:21
explain 7:20 11:2
 36:5
extent 17:16
eyes 26:18

< F >
failed 42:18 43:16
fall 45:15
familiar 16:6, 8
 21:12 36:6
far 6:19 11:7, 23
 20:4 21:7 30:23

48:15
farther 30:23
faulty 22:13
feel 31:22 37:9
fell 47:2
find 17:17 18:22
 23:23 35:18
fine 40:12 49:7
fire 21:8, 19 22:4
 26:21 27:12 33:7
 40:1 41:15 42:1
 47:15 48:4, 10, 12
fires 34:8, 12 47:7
FIRM 2:8
first 4:2 13:17
 17:3 21:7, 10
 34:11 36:11 41:9
 42:18 43:16 44:6
fix 47:4
fixing 7:17
Floor 2:5
Florence 8:23, 24
fluids 10:7
follows 4:3
foregoing 52:5, 9
forgive 34:25
forgotten 33:14
formal 7:3
former 16:24
forth 25:11
found 29:7, 19 37:7
founded 6:12 7:13
four 43:20, 24 44:1
front 12:1 17:10
fuel 14:4 22:13, 15
 23:1, 2, 5, 8 25:5, 8,
 9, 10, 16, 17, 18, 20,
 21, 23 26:2, 4, 5, 6, 9
 27:10, 15, 20, 23
 28:5 30:20
full 52:9
full-time 7:18
further 44:14 45:2
 49:15 52:15
fuse 12:18
fuss 37:18

< G >
gas 22:9, 11 26:19,

23
gather 16:18
gauges 13:22 17:24
general 6:5
generic 12:16
getting 47:5
give 19:24 23:20,
 25 33:16 39:14
 49:4
given 18:21 20:24
 22:20 24:24 52:11
giving 41:3
glad 41:5 50:21, 24
glanced 22:24
go 6:23 7:11
 11:17 14:12 16:23
 17:17 25:23 28:15,
 21 30:2 32:6 39:12
goes 21:8 39:1
going 4:6 7:22
 13:12 16:14, 25
 17:1 22:1 28:23
 30:4, 22, 24 31:7
 32:21 46:6
good 10:16 12:8
 13:13 32:21 49:22
grew 6:21
guess 5:4 11:1, 25
 18:20 19:13 28:11
 29:5 39:11, 13
guessing 18:20
guy 26:18 37:6
 38:20, 24, 25

< H >
half 5:19
halfway 25:4
HAMILTON 1:5
 4:8 16:8 17:1, 4
 19:7 21:4 25:14,
 15 26:1 27:20
 28:3, 4 29:17, 21
 32:24 35:2 36:2, 7
 37:1 39:7, 17 41:9
 42:10 43:13
Hamilton's 3:12
 27:16 34:19 43:8
 48:6
hand 52:16
handled 42:12

happened 20:3
 36:1 37:19 48:17
happening 21:6
happy 37:22
hard 12:17
hear 20:8, 10, 12, 19,
 20, 21 49:12, 13
heard 21:5, 7, 10
 22:3, 5, 11 34:17
hearing 29:15 42:7
heat 45:6, 8, 10, 20,
 25 46:3, 10, 17, 20
held 50:7
HELLMAN 2:4
help 17:2
hereunto 52:16
High 6:25 7:1, 11,
 15 25:5, 8
higher 41:19
himself/herself 52:13
hit 12:17
hold 23:21 41:17
honestly 38:7
hood 41:16 42:1
hook 17:24 22:15
hose 33:7, 8 47:2, 5
hoses 14:7, 11, 12,
 15 44:24
hot 12:4 45:8, 17
 46:8, 16, 19 47:3
hundred 37:6

< I >
IAA 8:4, 5, 11 11:4,
 9
idea 18:21
identification 21:14,
 25 47:25 51:5
III 1:5
imagine 9:9
immediately 7:11
 26:20
important 23:25
 24:16
incurred 47:15
INDEX 3:1
individual 19:23
 34:20
industry 11:13
inform 43:15

information 17:9
 19:15, 24 29:2
 30:16 35:21
informed 32:25
initially 16:7
inside 46:18
inspect 25:4, 8, 15,
 18, 20
inspected 14:2
installation 35:4
 43:7
insurance 6:8 8:15
 9:9, 10 11:6, 10, 12,
 15
Insured 43:6
interested 52:16
Interruption 20:25
inventories 38:20
inventory 7:21 8:1
 9:11 10:24 26:18
 38:25 43:18 44:7
involved 42:9
involving 47:12
 48:5
issue 22:25 37:11
issued 21:15, 18
it'd 26:24
it'll 14:17 35:8
 43:11 44:6, 8
its 8:1 25:7

< J >
January 23:11
 24:3, 11, 18 52:17
Jr 15:21

< K >
keep 26:20 34:1, 7
KERSHAW 52:2, 17
Kia 3:9, 10, 12
 18:17 21:3, 15, 18,
 20 23:11 24:20
 25:4, 7 26:10, 13
 28:9 30:7 33:18
 34:9, 12 35:12
 36:9 43:8 47:12,
 14 48:5, 25
kind 7:18 15:9
 20:16 33:9 44:14
 48:18, 20, 21

kinds 16:2, 4 18:7,
 12
knew 26:12 33:6
knocking 37:18
know 4:12, 16, 24
 5:8 6:2 7:8, 9, 19
 8:17, 25 9:13, 14, 25
 10:7, 10, 14, 15, 16,
 18, 19, 20 11:1, 25
 12:3, 5, 9, 15, 18, 21,
 25 13:1, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10,
 11, 15, 16, 21, 22, 24
 14:1, 3, 15 15:4
 16:12, 24 17:1, 6, 11,
 13, 14, 15, 21, 22, 23,
 25 18:3, 4, 6, 9, 10,
 15 19:1, 3, 4, 12
 20:2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11,
 15, 17, 18 21:10
 22:7, 10, 16 26:15,
 22, 25 28:11, 13, 16
 29:5, 9, 11, 12, 18, 25
 31:3, 6 32:4 33:7,
 20 34:4 35:20
 36:6, 16, 17, 18, 20
 37:5, 8, 9, 11, 14, 15
 38:4, 7, 10, 24 39:1,
 12 40:7, 8, 13, 15, 18,
 19, 20 41:8, 12
 42:15 43:1, 20, 21,
 22, 24, 25 44:3, 25
 45:7, 9, 16, 17 46:21
 47:1, 3 48:9, 12, 15,
 22, 24
knowing 34:25
knowledge 34:8
known 27:17, 22

< L >
labor 25:6
lack 46:22
Lake 6:19, 21, 24
 7:1
Large 52:4
LAW 2:8
lawsuit 47:11, 23
leak 27:10, 16
leaking 25:9, 10
 26:19, 23 27:20

learn 34:11 35:25
led 7:18
Lee 16:15 17:2
 36:18 38:8 42:13
 43:4, 11, 19
legitimate 29:10
letting 4:12
level 12:8
lie 13:15
lift 26:17 38:25
 43:10
lights 14:3
limit 15:25 31:17
line 15:17 22:13
 23:1, 3, 6, 8 25:17,
 23 26:2, 4, 5 27:15,
 20, 23 28:5 32:22
lines 7:8 14:4, 7
 22:11, 13 25:16, 18,
 20, 21 26:6, 9
listed 21:13
listen 10:5 11:24
 12:6 17:21 35:8
listens 39:1
little 6:4 32:22
 36:5 38:14 39:15
 41:18 45:11
live 5:17, 19
living 6:20
LLC 1:9
located 18:25
LOCATION 1:18
 52:7
locked 46:13
long 4:14 5:12
 12:4 17:22 18:2
 38:8 44:19
LONNIE 1:5 16:8
 39:17
look 5:24 13:22
 21:16 22:22 25:2
 46:15
looked 22:11, 19
looking 23:10, 11
 24:2, 13 41:10
looks 24:6 41:15
loose 14:13
lot 13:10 20:14
 21:8 28:12 39:23

42:6
low 22:12 23:7, 8
 < M >
majority 11:14
making 37:17 38:15
man 37:5 40:6
management 15:18
manufacturer 18:24 20:1
mark 50:9, 24 51:2
marked 21:13, 24 22:21 47:24 50:11, 14, 19 51:4
matter 36:3 39:18
mean 4:15 7:6 8:16 9:8 10:14 11:7 12:21 15:4 16:12 17:10, 24 18:10, 12, 13, 14, 16, 19, 20 20:6, 18 22:4 26:16 28:12 29:5, 6, 7, 8, 12, 14 30:21 31:3, 5, 23 33:6 34:24 35:14, 15, 20 36:4 37:14 38:6, 23 39:11 40:15, 17 43:9, 19, 22 45:4
mechanic 38:19
mechanics 20:14 26:17
meetings 7:7
melt 45:8 46:19, 20
mentioned 9:5
mile 5:19
mileage 17:7
miles 17:12 37:7 44:2
mind 5:20 35:16, 17
minute 25:3 49:4, 5, 9
missing 26:25
models 18:14
money 40:10
months 46:11
motor 10:15, 16, 17 13:11
motor's 46:12
move 15:7

multiple 21:3
 < N >
name 15:20, 21
nationwide 9:7
native 6:18
nature 6:11
necessary 25:5
need 4:22 5:24 6:1, 2 13:15 41:5
needed 9:19
needs 4:11 19:12
neglected 47:4
neither 52:15
never 21:9
new 17:4 30:19
noise 38:16
normal 14:6 37:3
normally 26:23 37:8 44:16 45:23
Notary 52:4
notes 10:19 12:24 13:12, 14 44:9
Notice 3:11 13:3 26:10, 13 47:20
number 5:22, 23 24:5, 12, 17 33:14 50:22
numbers 34:5
 < O >
oath 41:4, 5
objected 29:25
Objection 27:25 29:4, 22 34:14 40:3 48:14
objections 52:8, 10
obtained 9:11
occasionally 15:2
occurring 34:12
offered 7:8
Office@clark-associates.com 1:25
official 52:17
Oh 27:5
Okay 5:7 6:3 7:20, 23 8:1, 20 9:1 10:10 11:16 12:10 13:19 14:21 15:22 16:5, 18, 23 18:21

20:24 21:12 22:18 24:20, 23 25:2, 22 26:8 27:2 28:2, 7, 25 30:6, 7, 25 32:4 33:9, 20 35:11, 24 38:3, 8 39:2, 14 40:24 41:2 42:5, 12, 15 43:2, 7, 13 44:12 45:5, 21 47:10, 18 48:4 49:3, 16 50:6
Olanta 6:16, 18
old 30:15 37:23
One-by-one 12:12
ones 8:21 9:2
operable 43:7
opportunity 52:11, 14
Optima 36:9
order 43:3
ordinary 28:20
originated 11:10
ought 19:12
outlet 25:9
owned 5:15
Owner 5:11 15:10
owning 11:7
owns 19:11
 < P >
P.A 2:4
PAGE 3:2, 8 24:2, 4, 12, 19 25:3, 4
pages 24:9
paid 11:10 42:25
papers 47:16
part 4:23 10:14
particular 8:20 10:12 16:1, 5 20:5 24:2, 24 31:19 40:9, 12
PARTS 1:9 5:10 6:5, 7, 9 7:4, 13, 17 9:11, 14, 19 10:8 13:18 25:6 31:15 33:13, 17, 22
party 52:15
pay 9:12 47:13
pending 47:12 52:16

people 8:2 27:8, 21 31:6 39:2, 23 47:14 48:22
percent 11:25 13:7
percentage 33:17
perfectly 4:20
person 39:9
personally 42:9, 11
phone 39:21, 22
Photo 3:12
photograph 41:10
pick 43:18
picked 43:25
picture 50:7
PINCKNEY 2:11 23:16 50:3, 17, 23
pipe 25:6, 9, 10
place 10:17 34:2
places 45:14
PLAINTIFF 2:3
Plaintiffs 1:7
PLEAS 1:1
please 4:16 5:8 49:19
plugs 14:10
point 39:13 45:3, 7
position 5:9
possibility 34:12
possible 35:14 39:23 43:24
pour 48:23
power 12:19
practice 28:18 37:3
PRESENT 2:11
president 15:10
pressure 22:12 23:8 25:5, 8 44:23
pretty 14:2 29:13
prevalent 34:9
probably 15:15 18:18, 19 33:2, 3 43:19
problem 21:9, 11, 19 23:9 26:9 36:14, 16 37:7, 12
problems 17:18 35:12 36:7 48:5
procedure 5:5 44:16
proceed 49:19

process 10:2, 23, 24
 14:7
processed 9:25
 10:1 15:3, 5
properly 14:5
Proposed 3:11
 47:20
public 6:24 52:4
pull 12:23
pulling 14:18
pump 25:9 30:20
purchase 39:18
purchaser 19:8, 23
 34:21
put 10:8, 18 12:23,
 24 22:9 37:4, 12
 43:9 44:7, 9, 17, 24
 45:6, 12, 21, 23, 25
 46:5, 9, 10
puts 37:17 38:24
putting 37:9

< Q >
question 13:8
 25:12 29:13, 24
 30:5 31:10, 12, 23
 32:5, 7, 8, 20 34:23
 41:6
questions 4:7, 9 5:4,
 8 16:24 33:11
 49:15, 18, 21
quite 41:14

< R >
RACHAEL 1:22
 52:2, 20
rack 44:17 45:24
radiator's 12:2
radio 10:19
rained 28:14
ran 13:13 45:8, 17
 46:16, 19 47:3
rarely 9:24 15:3
rattles 12:7
reaches 45:14
read 47:17 52:11
real 12:17 20:6
really 6:1 29:9
 31:7, 9 40:17 42:16

reason 4:16, 19 5:2
 6:2 19:19, 25 20:10
rebuilding 7:16
Recall 3:9, 10 19:9,
 17 20:8 22:12
 23:11, 25 24:11, 16,
 24 26:10, 13 29:18,
 20 30:7, 8, 16, 17
 31:4, 21 39:8
recalled 20:1 28:10
recalls 18:24 21:3,
 14, 18, 22 22:19
 28:22 30:18 32:9
 33:1
Recess 49:10
reckon 28:14
record 10:11 21:1
 34:7 42:5 47:19
 51:3 52:9
recorded 52:8
records 34:1
referenced 50:1
regard 11:13 36:1
related 42:24 52:15
remember 16:22
 36:10, 11 39:20, 22,
 24
remembering 35:1
REMOTE 1:18
replace 25:5 47:3
replaced 25:11
 36:22, 25 38:1
 42:19
replacement 42:16
REPORTED 1:22
REPORTER 1:22
 3:5 52:1, 4, 20
representing 4:21
requires 31:25
research 39:6
researched 22:4
researching 20:4
residential 5:18
rest 14:1
rev 12:5
right 6:11 7:2
 10:22 12:20 14:20,
 25 15:7 18:18
 19:5, 14, 19, 21
 23:10 27:1, 4, 11

28:6, 24 29:7 30:4,
 14 31:9 32:14
 33:3 34:18 36:13,
 18 37:23 38:6
 39:5 41:4 42:25
 44:7 45:1 46:2, 7,
 14, 25 48:1, 2, 3, 13
 49:3, 20 50:2
Road 5:22 6:16
 37:18 46:12
room 49:5
roughly 18:6 33:17
rude 31:1
rule 4:23
run 10:5 12:4
 13:3, 12 18:2 43:11
running 10:6 12:8,
 21 46:3

< S >
Safety 3:9, 10
 23:25 24:16
sale 16:16 42:9, 15,
 17
SARAH 2:11 50:2
save 39:15
saw 22:24, 25 23:1,
 5, 7 37:12 40:14
 41:18
saying 4:6 14:22
 19:22 21:18 25:24
 27:7 29:6
says 24:16 25:3, 7
 37:17
SC 1:23 2:5, 9
school 6:23, 24, 25
 7:1, 11, 15
screen's 15:9
seal 52:17
second 23:20 39:14
 40:1 41:11 42:17,
 19, 22 43:1, 3, 6, 17
see 11:21 13:18
 14:4 23:2, 19
 24:21 25:16 28:14,
 21 30:19 31:4
 38:13 39:6 41:20,
 21, 22, 23 43:10
 44:6, 14 46:3, 7

49:5
seeing 38:15
seen 24:24 27:22
 40:15, 19, 20, 22
SEIBELS 2:8
seizing 22:25
selection 43:17
sell 6:7, 9 8:2 9:19,
 22 10:14, 25 13:2
 14:15, 16, 22, 25
 15:3, 5 17:19 19:6,
 22 21:8 22:10, 13
 25:21 26:6 28:23
 31:19 32:9 33:8,
 18, 21, 22 44:13
 45:23
selling 35:13 48:25
sells 15:25
send 37:21 43:17
 44:25
sense 30:22
sent 41:12 42:16
 43:1
September 52:22
sets 26:18
Settlement 3:11
 47:12, 13, 20
shape 44:14
shelf 43:21 44:10,
 19 45:22
shipped 34:20 35:6
shop 13:10 37:4
 39:3
shops 20:15
shop's 37:16
show 41:13
shown 21:22
sign 52:14
signature 52:12, 14
simple 29:14 31:10,
 11
sir 5:6, 16 6:14, 22
 7:1, 5 8:6, 24 9:3,
 13, 17, 21 10:1, 13,
 25 11:23 13:5
 14:24 15:12 16:17,
 22 17:15 18:9, 15
 19:1, 3, 4, 11, 18, 20
 21:5 23:1, 4 24:21
 25:1 26:3, 4, 5, 7, 11,

15 27:3, 5, 13 30:10,
13 33:19, 23 34:3, 6,
10, 15, 23 36:12, 24
38:2 39:4 40:23
41:21, 23 42:2, 4, 11,
14, 21, 23 44:8, 22
45:4, 20 46:24
47:9 48:7, 19 49:2
sit 13:6 44:18
situation 4:8 35:11
six-month 13:9
size 45:11
skipping 26:24
smoking 12:8
sold 7:17 14:19
16:7, 8, 12 17:3, 7
21:4 25:13 26:1
27:19, 24 28:2, 3, 4
33:12 36:2, 24
39:7 46:10 48:5, 11
somebody 9:24
43:4
son 15:19
soon 7:11
sorry 50:13
sort 8:14 10:22
38:16
sound 10:16
source 15:25
SOUTH 1:1 6:17
52:1, 4, 17, 21
specifically 42:1
spread 20:16
staff 32:13, 19
stalling 26:24
stand 8:12, 13
standard 28:18
stands 8:15
Starburst 6:16
start 17:16 29:9
44:11
started 7:16 47:23
starting 26:21
STATE 1:1 52:1, 4
stated 52:7
States 8:19
steel 22:7, 8 48:23
step 49:5
stick 44:19 45:12

Street 2:5, 9
strip 6:8 14:6
strips 38:19, 22
structure 15:18
structured 7:6
stuff 7:7, 8 11:9
14:1, 16, 19 29:11
subject 18:24 19:9
29:18, 20 31:21
33:1, 10 39:7
submitted 47:21
subscribe 52:11
Suite 2:9
supposed 30:1, 18
37:4
sure 12:6, 7, 8
13:23 17:10 22:17
38:11 41:7 43:2,
22 44:17, 19, 22
45:7 49:24
switch 17:12
switched 26:20
sworn 4:2 52:5

< T >
tab 45:10, 19, 20
table 14:12
tabs 45:6, 8 46:1, 3,
5, 8, 9, 10, 20
take 4:15 10:3
11:18 12:12 14:12
16:2, 6 27:8 31:7,
15 32:22 37:8, 16,
20, 23 41:5 44:13,
16 45:24 49:8
taken 35:3 52:7
talk 4:19, 23 5:2
16:14 39:23
talked 39:20 44:2
50:19
talking 30:8 31:16
39:22
tell 5:22 6:4 13:7,
14 16:11, 19 17:13
18:4 19:8, 15 22:1,
3 29:16, 20 32:1, 7,
14, 17 33:21, 24
36:4 40:5 44:10
46:15

temperature 45:15
46:18
test 34:21 35:5
tested 46:7
testified 4:3
testify 52:5
testimony 25:25
38:3 52:7, 10
testing 44:14
Thank 6:4 32:20
51:1
thereof 52:16
thing 4:22, 25 7:19
8:14 10:21 13:24
14:3 20:8, 15, 17
35:7 45:11 49:6
things 14:4, 5 15:8
20:6 45:15
think 4:14 14:21
18:16 19:21 22:20
23:24 24:21 29:13,
14 31:10 33:4, 9
35:3, 23 36:20
37:14 40:16 45:4
Third 2:5
THOMAS 2:4
thought 22:8
three 44:1 45:13
TIME 1:18 5:7, 15
11:25 12:2 13:6, 7
14:17 21:10 28:15
29:19 39:13, 15
40:9, 12 52:7, 8, 10
times 13:10 27:9
34:24 44:5
Timmy 16:15 37:14
TISDALE 2:4 3:3
4:5 21:2 23:15, 22
24:1, 6, 10, 15, 23
32:10 47:19 49:3,
8, 11, 14, 17, 22 50:2,
4, 8, 11, 14, 21, 24
51:2
today 4:7
told 9:10 25:19
32:16, 18 36:21
38:12
Tom 23:14
tore 14:17

totaled 11:3
touch 43:14
training 7:3
transaction 16:6, 9,
19, 25 41:9
transcribed 52:9
transcription 52:9
transmission 13:25
30:21
trouble 35:15
true 27:14 31:13
52:9
Truluck 5:22
truth 52:5, 6
try 4:12 10:4 12:5,
9, 13 13:20, 22
17:13, 21 31:11
43:9, 10
trying 31:1, 2 39:15
turn 13:20 44:20,
22
turns 44:18
two 8:3 16:7
24:10 26:18 34:24
36:1, 8 38:21 39:2,
18 42:10 45:13
46:11
type 7:3, 12 10:20
13:24 14:3, 16
20:8, 15, 17 21:4
typically 17:11
37:16, 20

< U >
understand 5:1
14:21 19:21 21:21
28:1, 25 29:23
36:14 38:14 39:5,
25 41:7 44:4 47:6
understanding 22:6,
15 40:11
Understood 20:12
United 8:18
unplug 14:10
use 8:20, 21

< V >
variety 15:23, 24
various 21:17

VARNADO 2:8 4:18 23:13, 17 24:4, 8, 19 27:25 29:4, 22 30:2 32:6 34:14 40:3 48:14 49:7, 13, 16, 20, 23 50:6, 9, 13, 18 51:1 vehicle 11:3 20:5 24:21 vehicles 11:15 VERBATIM 1:22 52:2, 20 vet 17:16 vetted 43:2 Victory 24:17 VIDEOCONFEREN CE 1:18 visually 14:2 vs 1:9	43:9, 19 44:8 45:3, 6, 23 50:18 went 6:24 28:13 37:18 44:24 46:11 we're 11:18 13:12 16:14 31:16 49:6 we've 7:7 21:9, 10 33:9 35:14 48:9 what'd 23:2 32:17 45:18 whatever's 13:14 whatsoever 4:10 wheels 14:2 wind 11:3 wires 14:10 within-entitled 52:6 WITNESS 23:19, 24 24:13, 20 32:3 52:5, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16 word 20:16 37:8, 16, 20 work 10:19 39:2 worked 38:8 working 43:3 worry 18:5 would've 26:20 43:5 wreck 11:2 wrecked 7:16, 17 12:1, 22 wrench 44:17 wrong 25:25 29:16 36:10 38:4 WWW.CLARK- ASSOCIATES.COM 1:24	7:19 38:10 < Z > ZOE'LIA 1:5
< W > wacky 15:9 waived 52:14 want 4:15, 19 27:1 29:14 31:13, 23 wanted 5:1 9:25 21:17 27:6 40:6, 8 warehouse 10:9 warranty 13:9, 16 45:17 wash 44:23 45:25 water 12:3 18:2 46:18, 22 47:1, 2, 4 way 9:15 11:1 17:23 18:22 22:14, 16 42:2 45:16 46:19 Well 6:7, 19 7:5, 15 8:13, 15 10:3 11:8, 17, 23 12:15 13:5, 17, 20 14:6 15:2 17:9, 20 18:10, 18 19:5 20:14, 24 21:2 22:19 23:2, 10 24:4 25:2, 19 28:1, 11 29:13 30:14 31:22 32:16 33:6 34:25 36:22 37:3 40:5, 22 41:7	< Y > yards 7:7 YATES 2:4 yeah 7:25 11:14 14:8, 14 16:14 23:7, 16 28:19 29:25 30:2 36:16, 21 37:25 46:18 48:22 49:23 year 30:15 years 5:14 6:13, 20	

WORD LIST

< 1 >	51 (1)	attached (3)	called (4)
10 (5)	52 (1)	attention (1)	calling (2)
10:00 (1)	< 6 >	attorney (3)	cap (1)
100 (1)	6 (5)	auction (1)	capped (1)
105 (1)	< 8 >	auctioned (1)	caps (1)
11:13 (1)	843-762-6294 (1)	Auctions (1)	car (33)
12 (1)	< 9 >	authorized (1)	CAROLINA (6)
15 (1)	90 (1)	AUTO (8)	cars (18)
15-20 (1)	907 (1)	automobile (9)	CASE (10)
17 (2)	9-1-1 (1)	automobiles (1)	case-by-case (1)
17th (2)	< A >	available (1)	catch (2)
18V (1)	able (8)	availed (1)	catching (2)
< 2 >	access (2)	aware (9)	caught (3)
20 (4)	accessible (1)	< B >	cause (2)
200 (1)	acquire (2)	back (12)	certain (1)
2012 (1)	acquisition (1)	bad (1)	certainly (1)
2013 (1)	address (3)	based (1)	CERTIFICATE (2)
2019 (6)	advised (1)	basis (1)	CERTIFIED (4)
2019-CP-10-06567 (1)	affixed (2)	bearing (1)	certify (2)
2020 (1)	ago (2)	BEHALF (2)	charging (1)
2021 (1)	agree (2)	believe (2)	CHARLESTON (10)
2030 (1)	agreeable (1)	best (1)	check (19)
21 (2)	ahead (2)	beyond (1)	checking (2)
22 (1)	air (1)	bit (3)	checks (1)
23 (1)	airbag (1)	block (3)	Chevrolet (1)
29114 (1)	airbags (1)	born (1)	Christie (3)
29401 (2)	alternator (1)	bottom (1)	CHRISTINE (1)
29405 (1)	aluminum (1)	bought (5)	circumstances (2)
< 3 >	answer (9)	box (2)	City (4)
3 (8)	answered (5)	break (2)	claim (3)
301 (14)	answers (1)	BRIAN (3)	claims (2)
301's (1)	anymore (1)	bring (4)	clarified (1)
3302 (1)	anytime (1)	Broad (2)	clarify (1)
35 (1)	apparent (1)	broke (1)	CLARK (4)
38 (1)	apparently (1)	brought (3)	Class (2)
< 4 >	appears (2)	Brown (1)	class-action (2)
4 (5)	appreciate (3)	burn (6)	clean (2)
47 (1)	ARD (15)	burned (4)	closest (1)
< 5 >	Ard's (1)	burnt (5)	C-O (1)
5 (4)	area (1)	business (13)	Columbia (4)
5,000 (1)	ASE (1)	busted (1)	come (8)
50 (4)	asking (10)	buy (2)	comes (10)
	assessment (1)	buying (2)	comfortable (1)
	ASSOCIATES (1)	buys (1)	coming (3)
	assuming (2)	< C >	comment (1)
		California (1)	Commission (1)
		call (3)	COMMON (2)
			community (2)

companies (3)	damages (1)	engine (111)	four (3)
COMPANION (1)	DATE (2)	engines (28)	front (2)
company (21)	dated (7)	entire (3)	fuel (31)
complete (4)	dates (1)	entitled (3)	full (1)
complicate (2)	David (1)	epoxy (1)	full-time (1)
compressor (1)	day (2)	estimate (1)	further (4)
computer (11)	deal (1)	events (1)	fuse (1)
computer-aided (1)	dealers (1)	exactly (2)	fuss (1)
concerning (1)	dealing (2)	EXAMINATION	
concluded (1)	DECEMBER (1)	(4)	< G >
condition (2)	decide (1)	examined (1)	gas (4)
conditioner (1)	decided (2)	example (2)	gather (1)
confirm (1)	defect (4)	Excuse (1)	gauges (2)
connection (2)	defective (1)	Exhibit (14)	general (1)
connections (1)	defects (4)	EXHIBITS (6)	generic (1)
contact (1)	Defendant (2)	expires (1)	getting (1)
content (1)	deliver (1)	explain (3)	give (6)
continue (1)	depending (1)	extent (1)	given (5)
conversation (1)	depends (1)	eyes (1)	giving (1)
cooling (1)	DEPONENT (1)	< F >	glad (3)
Copart (7)	DEPOSITION (15)	failed (2)	glanced (1)
C-O-P-A-R-T (2)	described (1)	fall (1)	go (12)
Coparts (1)	DESCRIPTION (1)	familiar (4)	goes (2)
Copart's (1)	detached (1)	far (7)	going (14)
copy (1)	details (1)	farther (1)	good (5)
corner (1)	detected (1)	faulty (1)	grew (1)
correct (22)	determine (1)	feel (2)	guess (9)
cost (2)	determining (1)	fell (1)	guessing (1)
costs (1)	different (8)	find (4)	guy (5)
could've (2)	dime (1)	fine (2)	< H >
counsel (1)	discover (1)	fire (13)	half (1)
COUNTY (3)	discovered (2)	fires (3)	halfway (1)
couple (1)	Discussion (1)	FIRM (1)	HAMILTON (25)
course (4)	dismantle (1)	first (11)	Hamilton's (5)
COURT (1)	drain (1)	fix (1)	hand (1)
cover (1)	drive (1)	fixing (1)	handled (1)
covered (1)	driving (1)	Floor (1)	happened (4)
crack (2)	Due (2)	Florence (2)	happening (1)
cracks (1)	duly (2)	fluids (1)	happy (1)
crank (23)	< E >	follows (1)	hard (1)
cranks (3)	earlier (1)	foregoing (2)	hear (9)
crimped (1)	educate (1)	forgive (1)	heard (7)
CULBREATH (1)	education (3)	forgotten (1)	hearing (2)
customer (7)	eight (1)	formal (1)	heat (9)
customers (2)	either (4)	former (1)	held (1)
cut (4)	employees (1)	forth (1)	HELLMAN (1)
CVR (2)	ended (1)	found (3)	help (1)
< D >	ends (1)	founded (2)	hereunto (1)

High (6)	Jr (1)	looked (2)	noise (1)
higher (1)	< K >	looking (5)	normal (2)
himself/herself (1)	keep (3)	looks (2)	normally (4)
hit (1)	KERSHAW (2)	loose (1)	Notary (1)
hold (3)	Kia (26)	lot (6)	notes (5)
honestly (1)	kind (8)	low (3)	Notice (5)
hood (2)	kinds (5)	< M >	number (7)
hook (2)	knew (2)	majority (1)	numbers (1)
hose (5)	knocking (1)	making (2)	< O >
hoses (5)	know (160)	man (2)	oath (2)
hot (7)	knowing (1)	management (1)	objected (1)
hundred (1)	knowledge (1)	manufacturer (2)	Objection (6)
< I >	known (2)	mark (3)	objections (2)
IAA (5)	< L >	marked (8)	obtained (1)
idea (1)	labor (1)	matter (2)	occasionally (1)
identification (4)	lack (1)	mean (51)	occurring (1)
III (1)	Lake (4)	mechanic (1)	offered (1)
imagine (1)	Large (1)	mechanics (2)	Office@clark-
immediately (2)	LAW (1)	meetings (1)	associates.com (1)
important (2)	lawsuit (2)	melt (3)	official (1)
incurred (1)	leak (2)	mentioned (1)	Oh (1)
INDEX (1)	leaking (5)	mile (1)	Okay (59)
individual (2)	learn (2)	mileage (1)	Olanta (2)
industry (1)	led (1)	miles (3)	old (2)
inform (1)	Lee (8)	mind (3)	One-by-one (1)
information (6)	legitimate (1)	minute (4)	ones (2)
informed (1)	letting (1)	missing (1)	operable (1)
initially (1)	level (1)	models (1)	opportunity (2)
inside (1)	lie (1)	money (1)	Optima (1)
inspect (5)	lift (3)	months (1)	order (1)
inspected (1)	lights (1)	motor (4)	ordinary (1)
installation (2)	limit (2)	motor's (1)	originated (1)
insurance (8)	line (16)	move (1)	ought (1)
Insured (1)	lines (11)	multiple (1)	outlet (1)
interested (1)	listed (1)	< N >	owned (1)
Interruption (1)	listen (5)	name (2)	Owner (2)
inventories (1)	listens (1)	nationwide (1)	owning (1)
inventory (8)	little (7)	native (1)	owns (1)
involved (1)	live (2)	nature (1)	< P >
involving (2)	living (1)	necessary (1)	P.A (1)
issue (2)	LLC (1)	need (6)	PAGE (8)
issued (2)	located (1)	needed (1)	pages (1)
it'd (1)	LOCATION (2)	needs (2)	paid (2)
it'll (5)	locked (1)	neglected (1)	papers (1)
its (2)	long (7)	neither (1)	part (2)
< J >	LONNIE (3)	never (1)	particular (10)
January (5)	look (6)	new (2)	PARTS (18)

party (1)	purchase (1)	researching (1)	sign (1)
pay (2)	purchaser (3)	residential (1)	signature (2)
pending (2)	put (21)	rest (1)	simple (3)
people (8)	puts (2)	rev (1)	sir (77)
percent (2)	putting (1)	right (45)	sit (2)
percentage (1)	< Q >	Road (4)	situation (2)
perfectly (1)	question (14)	room (1)	six-month (1)
person (1)	questions (9)	roughly (2)	size (1)
personally (2)	quite (1)	rude (1)	skipping (1)
phone (2)	< R >	rule (1)	smoking (1)
Photo (1)	RACHAEL (3)	run (6)	sold (22)
photograph (1)	rack (2)	running (4)	somebody (2)
pick (1)	radiator's (1)	< S >	son (1)
picked (1)	radio (1)	Safety (4)	soon (1)
picture (1)	rained (1)	sale (4)	sorry (1)
PINCKNEY (5)	ran (6)	SARAH (2)	sort (3)
pipe (3)	rarely (2)	save (1)	sound (1)
place (2)	rattles (1)	saw (8)	source (1)
places (1)	reaches (1)	saying (7)	SOUTH (6)
PLAINTIFF (1)	read (2)	says (4)	specifically (1)
Plaintiffs (1)	real (2)	SC (3)	spread (1)
PLEAS (1)	really (6)	school (6)	staff (2)
please (3)	reason (7)	screen's (1)	stalling (1)
plugs (1)	rebuilding (1)	seal (1)	stand (2)
point (3)	Recall (23)	second (11)	standard (1)
position (1)	recalled (2)	see (23)	stands (1)
possibility (1)	recalls (10)	seeing (1)	Starburst (1)
possible (3)	Recess (1)	seen (6)	start (3)
pour (1)	reckon (1)	SEIBELS (1)	started (2)
power (1)	record (7)	seizing (1)	starting (1)
practice (2)	recorded (1)	selection (1)	STATE (3)
PRESENT (1)	records (1)	sell (32)	stated (1)
president (1)	referenced (1)	selling (2)	States (1)
pressure (5)	regard (2)	sells (1)	steel (3)
pretty (2)	related (2)	send (3)	step (1)
prevalent (1)	remember (6)	sense (1)	stick (2)
probably (6)	remembering (1)	sent (3)	Street (2)
problem (9)	REMOTE (1)	September (1)	strip (2)
problems (4)	replace (2)	sets (1)	strips (2)
procedure (2)	replaced (5)	Settlement (4)	structure (1)
proceed (1)	replacement (1)	shape (1)	structured (1)
process (4)	REPORTED (1)	shelf (4)	stuff (7)
processed (4)	REPORTER (5)	shipped (2)	subject (8)
properly (1)	representing (1)	shop (3)	submitted (1)
Proposed (2)	requires (1)	shops (1)	subscribe (1)
public (2)	research (1)	shop's (1)	Suite (1)
pull (1)	researched (1)	show (1)	supposed (3)
pulling (1)		shown (1)	sure (15)
pump (2)			switch (1)

switched (1)
 sworn (2)

 < T >
 tab (3)
 table (1)
 tabs (10)
 take (20)
 taken (2)
 talk (6)
 talked (3)
 talking (3)
 tell (24)
 temperature (2)
 test (2)
 tested (1)
 testified (1)
 testify (1)
 testimony (4)
 testing (1)
 Thank (3)
 thereof (1)
 thing (13)
 things (5)
 think (18)
 Third (1)
 THOMAS (1)
 thought (1)
 three (2)
 TIME (18)
 times (4)
 Timmy (2)
 TISDALE (28)
 today (1)
 told (6)
 Tom (1)
 tore (1)
 totaled (1)
 touch (1)
 training (1)
 transaction (5)
 transcribed (1)
 transcription (1)
 transmission (2)
 trouble (1)
 true (3)
 Truluck (1)
 truth (3)
 try (12)

trying (3)
 turn (3)
 turns (1)
 two (13)
 type (10)
 typically (3)

 < U >
 understand (14)
 understanding (3)
 Understood (1)
 United (1)
 unplug (1)
 use (2)

 < V >
 variety (2)
 various (1)
 VARNADO (25)
 vehicle (3)
 vehicles (1)
 VERBATIM (3)
 vet (1)
 vetted (1)
 Victory (1)
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1 IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS
2 FOR THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
3 CHARLESTON COUNTY

4 DEPOSITION OF TIMMY LEE

5 LONNIE HAMILTON, III, AND
6 ZOE'LIA L. CULBREATH,

7 Plaintiffs,

8
9 vs.

CASE NO. 2019-CP-10-06567

10
11 301 AUTO PARTS, LLC,

12 Defendant.
13
14

15 DEPONENT: TIMMY LEE

16
17 DATE: DECEMBER 10, 2020

18 TIME: 11:15 AM

19
20 LOCATION: REMOTE VIDEOCONFERENCE

21 REPORTED BY: RACHAEL CLARK, CVR
22 CERTIFIED VERBATIM REPORTER
23 CLARK & ASSOCIATES, INC.
24 CHARLESTON, SC 29405
25 843-762-6294
WWW.CLARK-ASSOCIATES.COM
Office@clark-associates.com

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A P P E A R A N C E S

ON BEHALF OF PLAINTIFF:

HELLMAN, YATES & TISDALE, P.A.
BY: THOMAS S. TISDALE
105 Broad Street, Third Floor
Charleston, SC 29401

ON BEHALF OF DEFENDANT:

THE SEIBELS LAW FIRM
BY: CHRISTINE COMPANION VARNADO
38 Broad Street, Suite 200
Charleston, SC 29401

ALSO PRESENT: SARAH PINCKNEY

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INDEX

EXAMINATION	PAGE
BY MR. TISDALE	4
CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER	43

EXHIBITS

NO.	DESCRIPTION	PAGE
1	301 Auto Parts Invoice	9
2	Official Check	25

1

EXAMINATION

2 BY MR. TISDALE:

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Q. Mr. Lee, you're here represented today by your insurance company lawyer, Ms. Varnado. And so she may enter an objection occasionally to questions I ask, but I'm Tom Tisdale. I represent Mr. Lonnie Hamilton, who you've met, I think. And I'm just going to be asking you a few questions about -- just what you recall of the information you have about the transactions when you -- you all sold him one engine that was replaced by another engine.

And I just want to say that if I ask you anything that you don't understand -- I'm not going to try to do that, but if I do, would you please let me know so I can clarify the question and be certain you understand what I'm asking about?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Can you do that? And also -- also, if you feel the need to speak with your lawyer -- your company's lawyer for any reason during this deposition, all you have to do is let me know and you will be allowed to do that.

And then I don't think this deposition

1 will take very long, but if you need to take a
2 break for any reason -- for any reason whatever,
3 just let me know and we'll certainly do that.
4 Okay?

5 A. Okay.

6 Q. Now, have you ever given a deposition
7 before?

8 A. No, sir.

9 Q. Okay --

10 COURT REPORTER: Mr. Tisdale?

11 MR. TISDALE: Yeah. You want to go
12 ahead and administer an oath?

13 COURT REPORTER: Yes, sorry to
14 interrupt.

15 MR. TISDALE: The court reporter,
16 Mr. Lee, is going to administer -- ask you to
17 raise your right hand, and if you're able to,
18 swear to tell the truth in this matter. So she's
19 going to do that now.

20 TIMMY LEE,
21 having been first duly sworn, was examined and
22 testified as follows:

23 Q. (MR. TISDALE) Okay. Let's see -- there
24 he is. I can see you fine. Can you see me okay?

25 A. Yes, sir.

1 Q. All right. Now, how long have you --
2 first of all, do you live in Olanta, around
3 there?

4 A. No, sir. I live in Pamplico.

5 Q. In where?

6 A. Pamplico, South Carolina.

7 Q. Oh, yeah. Pamplico. And have you
8 always lived there? Did you grow up there?

9 A. No, sir.

10 Q. Where were you born?

11 A. Well, I was born in Florence, but I was
12 raised in Coward, South Carolina.

13 Q. Raised in where?

14 A. Coward, South Carolina. It's a little
15 town.

16 Q. A little town near Florence, isn't it?

17 A. Yes, sir.

18 Q. You were born in Florence?

19 A. I was born at the hospital in Florence,
20 yes, sir.

21 Q. McLeod Hospital?

22 A. I don't know exactly which hospital it
23 was.

24 Q. I'm just asking that because I was born
25 in Florence too. So not that that's got a lot to

1 do with this particular situation, but anyway.

2 Did you go to school and where?

3 A. Lake City.

4 Q. And did you live in Lake City throughout
5 your school experience?

6 A. No, sir. I lived in Coward.

7 Q. Okay. You lived in Coward, went to
8 school in Lake City?

9 A. Yes, sir.

10 Q. Okay. And did you finish high school in
11 Lake City?

12 A. Yes, sir.

13 Q. What year?

14 A. 1999.

15 Q. And what year were you born in?

16 A. I was born in 1981.

17 Q. Okay. And when you got out of high
18 school, what did you do next in your life
19 activities?

20 A. Well, I worked for myself for a while,
21 and I moved over here about ten years ago.

22 Q. What did you do when you worked for
23 yourself?

24 A. Landscaping work.

25 Q. All right. What did you do when you

1 quit landscaping?

2 A. I came to work at 301 Auto Parts.

3 Q. What year did you do that? Do you
4 remember?

5 A. I don't know the exact date. It was
6 around ten years ago.

7 Q. So if this is 2020, that would've been
8 around 2010?

9 A. Yes, sir.

10 Q. What is your job at 301? I'm going to
11 call it 301, but the name of the company is 301
12 Auto Parts; is it not?

13 A. Yes, sir.

14 Q. So what is your job at 301?

15 A. I'm a salesman.

16 Q. All right. And what do you sell?

17 A. Parts for cars.

18 Q. And where do you get those parts?

19 A. Come off the cars that we get out here.
20 I don't know exactly where they're bought or
21 where they come from. I'm just a salesman.

22 Q. All right. And has that been your job
23 since you started at 301 to be a salesman?

24 A. Yes, sir.

25 Q. Okay. How many salesmen does 301 have?

1 A. Three.

2 Q. Now, do you recall selling an engine to
3 Mr. Hamilton for a Kia automobile?

4 A. I do recall selling it to him, but I
5 don't know when the exact date was.

6 Q. Okay. I've got what has been marked for
7 this deposition -- you know, we have exhibits,
8 which are pieces of paper, and we put numbers on
9 them for this deposition to refer to them. And
10 I'm looking at Exhibit Number 1 that I guess is
11 somewhere, I hope, available to you there where
12 you are.

13 But this one says Exhibit 1 at the top.
14 It's a 301 Auto Parts invoice I guess we'd call
15 it. Yeah. It's invoice number 148910, and it
16 has your name on it. And it says on the invoice
17 notes, Thanks for the order. With three
18 exclamation marks. Timmy. Extension 5367. That
19 would be you, wouldn't it?

20 (Exhibit No. 1 was marked for
21 identification.)

22 A. Yes, sir.

23 MS. VARNADO: Does he have the
24 exhibit?

25 MR. TISDALE: I don't know whether

1 he does or not. That's what I was asking. It's
2 the one we handed in.

3 MS. PINCKNEY: He should have it
4 there.

5 MR. TISDALE: He should have it
6 there.

7 MS. VARNADO: Do you have the
8 exhibit?

9 MR. TISDALE: Do you have the
10 exhibit?

11 THE WITNESS: Not right in front of
12 me, no, sir.

13 MR. TISDALE: Where are they? I
14 mean, what do you mean not in front of you?
15 Where would they be?

16 THE WITNESS: I don't have an
17 exhibit, no, sir.

18 MS. VARNADO: Okay. We -- they
19 were sent. I know Mr. Ard had them. They may be
20 on his computer. Do you know how to access them?

21 THE WITNESS: You sent them by
22 e-mail or --

23 MS. VARNADO: Why don't we take a
24 break and let you go find Mr. Ard and ask him to
25 show you where the exhibits are so you can look

1 at them as part of the deposition.

2 MR. TISDALE: Print them out if
3 they need to be.

4 THE WITNESS: Okay.

5 MR. TISDALE: Probably save us a
6 little bit of time.

7 THE WITNESS: Okay.

8 MR. TISDALE: Are you going to go
9 do that now? Take your time. Take your time.

10 (Recess.)

11 Q. (MR. TISDALE) Now, if I can recall what
12 I was getting ready to ask you after all that,
13 this is an invoice, is it not, Exhibit 1? You
14 can start to look at it as we go through. This
15 is invoice number 148910. Did you prepare this
16 invoice?

17 A. Yes, sir.

18 Q. And is this for the sale of an engine to
19 Mr. Lonnie Hamilton?

20 A. Yes, sir.

21 Q. And -- I'm just getting it in the record
22 and -- from what we're looking at -- and the
23 amount he bought this engine for was \$1,828,
24 wasn't it? \$1828?

25 A. \$1828. Yes, sir.

1 Q. And what kind of engine was it that you
2 sold to him?

3 A. It says, 2013 Kia Optima.

4 Q. All right. Had you had any experience
5 with those engines before this, to your
6 knowledge?

7 A. I have probably sold them, but I'm
8 really not -- I don't have any experience with
9 them. I have sold them, but I don't --

10 Q. Okay. And the next little block down
11 from stock number it says, CORE-DUE 2 ENGINE
12 ASSEMBLY. What does that mean? Do you see what
13 I'm talking about?

14 A. Yeah. That is the core charge for the
15 old engine.

16 Q. The what?

17 A. The core --

18 MS. VARNADO: I apologize. I'm
19 having computer issues. And so it's freezing.
20 Let me see if I can get that fixed, please.

21 MR. TISDALE: Certainly. We'll
22 just standby. We're going to standby. We can't
23 -- we'll wait for her to get back.

24 (Technical interruption.)

25 Q. (Mr. TISDALE) I was asking you about

1 this invoice, Exhibit 1, and the language on it
2 says, CORE-TWO -- due, I'm sorry. Due. Two
3 engine assembly. And apparently the charge for
4 whatever that is is \$100. Could you explain to
5 me what core-due two engine assembly means on
6 this invoice? I just don't know anything about
7 that, and I'm just trying to figure out what it
8 means.

9 A. That is the core charge for the old
10 engine.

11 Q. The core charge for the old engine?

12 A. The core charge for the engine. Some
13 engines have core charges --

14 Q. What is a core charge? What is a core
15 charge?

16 A. The core charge is for the core engine
17 out of the car.

18 Q. Am I understanding you to be saying to
19 take the engine out of the car, remove it from
20 the car?

21 A. That is correct.

22 Q. Okay. And so who would -- in this case,
23 Mr. Hamilton was buying a new engine. I mean,
24 not a new engine, but an engine from you for his
25 car. And does this mean that someone removed the

1 engine that he was getting rid of to install the
2 new one -- the new used one?

3 A. The core charge is completely up to the
4 customer itself. They may want to keep their
5 core engine and just pay the core charge. The
6 option of the core is under their discretion.

7 Q. I understand. But does core -- that is
8 the engine? That's what a core is, the engine
9 that is to be taken out of the car to make room
10 for the one to be replacing it? Am I right? I'm
11 just trying to figure out the process.

12 A. The core is the engine itself.
13 Compressor, alternator. Different engines --
14 different parts have different core charges.

15 Q. Okay. So just tell me if I'm right or
16 wrong. I think I understand now what you're
17 talking about.

18 When you sold this engine to Mr.
19 Hamilton, the old engine needed to be taken out,
20 correct, to make room for the new one? For the
21 new used one. Is that right?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. All right. And who would take out the
24 old engine, physically take it out?

25 A. I don't know who took it out of his car.

1 I sent the engine to Russell Jenkins Paint &
2 Body. That's where he told me to send it.

3 Q. All right. So it wouldn't be anybody
4 from 301, would it?

5 A. No, sir.

6 Q. All right. And why was he charged \$100
7 for that if you all didn't take it out?

8 A. I didn't understand the question. Can
9 you repeat that one more time?

10 Q. Well, the way I'm reading it, it says,
11 Core-Due, and you've explained that that's the
12 old engine. And then it says there's a \$100
13 charge. What is the \$100 charge for?

14 A. The \$100 charge is for the core itself.
15 Whether the customer keeps the core or sends the
16 core back is completely up to him.

17 Q. Okay. But what is the \$100 charge for?

18 A. It's for the core engine.

19 Q. Okay.

20 MS. VARNADO: So let me clear this
21 up. That is if they give the core back -- if
22 they give the old engine to 301, they'll give the
23 customer a \$100 refund.

24 MR. TISDALE: Okay. So in other
25 words, they -- but this is a \$100 charge, as I

1 see it.

2 MS. VARNADO: If they give the core
3 back -- if the customer let's 301 have the core,
4 then they get a \$100 refund.

5 MR. TISDALE: All right.

6 MS. PINCKNEY: Which we have the
7 \$100 refund.

8 MR. TISDALE: Okay. I'm told that
9 another exhibit sort of shows the refund.

10 MS. VARNADO: Right.

11 (Discussion off the record.)

12 Q. (MR. TISDALE) I don't think this is an
13 issue that we need to get bogged down in. I was
14 just unclear as to what the core was. I
15 understand it's the engine in the car and that it
16 either comes back to 301 or it is kept by whoever
17 has it, right? Right, Mr. Lee?

18 A. I mean, it would be at that shop. Yeah,
19 I would say so.

20 Q. It did not come back to 301?

21 A. The core?

22 Q. Yeah.

23 A. I never seen the core, no, sir.

24 Q. I believe -- I don't think we need to
25 learn any more about the core right now.

1 (Discussion off the record.)

2 Q. (MR. TISDALE) All right. Now, I'm just
3 going to ask you a few questions about this
4 particular transaction, to the extent you
5 remember. If you don't remember, of course,
6 don't try -- in other words, just tell us what
7 you know about it. If you don't know, you don't
8 know. If you do, you do. No problem. But do
9 you remember Mr. Hamilton contacting you about
10 buying this engine?

11 A. I remember speaking to him when he
12 ordered it, yes, sir.

13 Q. This was on the telephone?

14 A. On the telephone, yes, sir.

15 Q. All right. And do you remember what he
16 wanted, what he ordered? You can look at the
17 invoice if you need to.

18 A. The invoice says, '13 Kia Optima. I
19 don't recall, but that's what's on the invoice.

20 Q. As far as you know, that's what he
21 bought?

22 A. Sir?

23 Q. Is that what he bought from 301?

24 A. Yes, sir.

25 Q. All right. And what did you do after

1 receiving the order?

2 A. I made this ticket right here.

3 Q. Okay. What did you do after making the
4 ticket?

5 A. I didn't do anything. The guys in the
6 back loaded it up on the truck and they delivered
7 it to him.

8 Q. And I assume that Mr. Hamilton asked you
9 to ship it to this place called Russell Jenkins
10 Paint & Body shop?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. Anything else about that aspect of it
13 that you had anything to do with?

14 A. I mean, I don't remember exactly what we
15 spoke about on the phone.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. I know he ordered the engine and told me
18 to send it and gave me the address to send it to
19 and I --

20 Q. North Charleston?

21 A. Yes, sir.

22 Q. Had you had any experience with the --
23 do you have any -- first, let me go back a
24 minute. Excuse me. Do you have any experience
25 checking the engines before they are sold to see

1 if they are in good working order, have any
2 problems?

3 A. No, sir. I don't do that. I'm just a
4 salesman. We -- they have people in the back
5 that crank the cars and stuff, if they can crank
6 them, but I'm just a salesman.

7 Q. All right. Do they do anything other
8 than see if they will crank, these people who
9 inspect them?

10 MS. VARNADO: Objection.

11 Q. Do you know? Do you know if they do
12 anything other than see if the engines will crank
13 when they inspect them?

14 A. They have a process of things that they
15 do. I don't know exactly what they do. Like I
16 said, I work in the office.

17 Q. All right. Do you know if they have --
18 strike that. What do they do to -- what do they
19 do to ensure that the engine they are selling
20 through you as salesman is in good working order?

21 A. I'm not exactly sure of the process. I
22 don't know. I go by what's in the computer, and
23 if you look at that invoice, it says ran good on
24 the invoice. That's what I see.

25 Q. It says what?

1 A. It says, Federal emissions, 2.4L- RAN
2 GOOD.

3 Q. Yeah. Ran good, right? Is that
4 referring to the engine?

5 A. Yes, sir.

6 Q. Okay. Had you heard -- heard or
7 received any information that there had been any
8 kind of problem with Kia engines catching on
9 fire?

10 A. No, sir.

11 Q. And would there be a way for 301 to
12 check to see if any of these engines had caught
13 on fire in use? Do you know? Would you all be
14 able to check that if you wanted to?

15 MS. VARNADO: Objection. He's not
16 offered for the business, Tom. He's individual.

17 MR. TISDALE: I'm just asking him
18 what he knows, that's all. Christie, I guess
19 it's all right, but we're not seeing your
20 picture, but I guess you know that and it's
21 certainly okay, but --

22 MS. VARNADO: Yeah, you're not
23 seeing my picture because that's -- I need that
24 so that I won't freeze up, but -- so yeah. But I
25 can hear you and I can see you all.

1 MR. TISDALE: But I can't see Mr.
2 Lee. It is -- I can only see his little old box
3 up there.

4 (Technical interruption)

5 Q. (MR. TISDALE) Mr. Lee, I think I was
6 asking you this: Obviously you all have
7 computers that you use in your business, do you
8 not?

9 A. Yes, sir.

10 Q. And do you have access to the computers
11 at 301 Auto Parts?

12 A. I have access to my computer.

13 Q. Okay. Well, that's a computer for use
14 at 301 Auto Parts, is it not?

15 A. Yes. I use it everyday, yes, sir.

16 Q. You use it everyday, right?

17 A. Yes, sir.

18 Q. All right. So do you know whether
19 anybody at 301 Auto Parts has ever looked online
20 to check to see if any recalls have been issued
21 on any of the engines it sells?

22 A. I don't know, sir. I can't answer about
23 what other people do. I don't know.

24 Q. Have you?

25 A. Have I done it?

1 Q. Yes, sir.

2 A. No.

3 Q. All right. And just to come down to
4 this invoice a little bit, have you ever -- have
5 you -- I know you've answered the question, but
6 just for the record, have you ever used your
7 computer to check online to see if Kia Motors has
8 ever issued any recalls for engines that were
9 prone to catch on fire?

10 A. No, sir.

11 Q. Okay. And you have not done that on
12 your computer?

13 A. No.

14 Q. Do you know of anyone else at 301 Auto
15 Parts who has made such a check as I have asked
16 you about that you have not done?

17 A. I don't know. I don't know. I don't
18 know if they have or they have not. I can't
19 answer for what they do.

20 Q. Okay. Have you ever heard any
21 conversation among the people -- between the
22 people at 301 Auto Parts that Kia engines have
23 been subject to recalls for engine fire
24 possibilities?

25 A. No.

1 Q. Okay. All right. Now, just so we'll
2 understand the transaction here with Mr.
3 Hamilton. This invoice was prepared by you, was
4 it not, **Exhibit 1**, that we are looking at on your
5 computer?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. And after you prepared that invoice,
8 what happens to get the engine to Mr. Hamilton?

9 A. Well, the customer makes the order, a
10 pull ticket is made for it, then the guys in the
11 back at the warehouse, they wash -- you know,
12 take the engine off the shelf, wash it, turn it,
13 place heat tabs on it, and then it's loaded on
14 the truck and it's delivered the next day.

15 Q. All right. And in this case it was sent
16 down to North Charleston to Russell Jenkins'
17 shop, was it not?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. Now, Mr. Ard talked about those heat
20 tabs. I just want to ask you a minute about
21 those heat tabs. What are those heat tabs for?
22 Why do you put them on the engine?

23 A. That's the only way you can tell if the
24 engine has been run hot.

25 Q. Okay. And what is the significance of

1 that? Why do you all want to know if the engine
2 has run hot?

3 A. Because when the engine overheats, it
4 warps the valves and stuff like that, the head,
5 messes it up.

6 Q. You mean -- and would I be correct that
7 you do that in case the client has problems with
8 the engine as you described with the valves and
9 so forth, and it's caused by heat. Those heat
10 tabs will indicate that; is that right?

11 A. I don't really understand that question.

12 Q. Okay. What is the purpose of the heat
13 tabs?

14 A. The heat tabs are to make sure that the
15 engine has not been run hot and the proper fluids
16 have been put in it.

17 Q. All right. Now, would those heat tabs
18 also give an indication if the engine had caught
19 on fire?

20 A. I don't know.

21 Q. Don't know.

22 A. I mean, I don't know if it burns up. I
23 don't know.

24 Q. Okay. Now, Mr. Hamilton, according to
25 the invoice, paid \$1828 for the first engine,

1 correct?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. And that included -- all right. And
4 this is Exhibit 2 that we're talking about. You
5 don't need to look at it. We agree on the price,
6 but you can.

7 (Exhibit No. 2 was marked for
8 identification.)

9 A. Exhibit 2 is the check?

10 Q. Yeah.

11 A. Okay.

12 Q. How much did Mr. Hamilton pay for the
13 engine based on that check?

14 A. What was the question? I'm sorry, I
15 didn't hear you.

16 Q. I'm sorry. How much did Mr. Hamilton
17 pay for the engine? And you may refer to the
18 check if you want to.

19 A. \$1,828.

20 Q. All right. Now -- and that was
21 delivered, according to the invoice -- well, the
22 invoice is dated 6/11/19, June 11th, '19, and was
23 shipped on the same day. And it was received by
24 him the next day at the latest, wasn't it? The
25 engine. The first engine.

1 A. Hold on. Let me get back to the
2 invoice. It should have been shipped on the
3 11th.

4 Q. Yeah. And gotten it that day or the
5 next, right?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. All right. Now, were you notified at
8 some point that that engine would not -- had
9 defects and wouldn't work?

10 A. Yes, sir.

11 Q. Who notified you?

12 A. Mr. Hamilton.

13 Q. All right. And what did you tell Mr.
14 Hamilton to do under those circumstances since
15 the engine wouldn't work?

16 Well, first of all, let me go back, Mr.
17 Lee. What did Mr. Hamilton tell you?

18 A. I really don't remember the conversation
19 word for word, sir. It's been a year ago.

20 Q. All right. Well, I'm not asking word
21 for word. What was the import of the message
22 that he was sending you in the conversation?

23 A. He let me know that the shop had put the
24 engine in and it was bad.

25 Q. Did he -- and what did you say to him?

1 A. I told him that I could -- I don't know
2 exactly what I told him. Nine out of ten times,
3 I tell the customer that if we have another
4 engine that I can give them another one -- send
5 another engine or if we don't have another
6 engine, we give them their money back.

7 Q. And in this case, what did you do?

8 A. We had another engine and we sent him
9 another engine.

10 Q. And did you do anything to check that
11 second engine that you didn't do on checking the
12 first engine before -- checking it for, you know,
13 quality before you sent it or was it the same
14 process?

15 A. It should have been the same process. I
16 don't know. Like I said, I'm a salesman.

17 Q. Do you remember if you asked Mr.
18 Hamilton what was wrong with the engine that he
19 was calling about?

20 A. I don't know. I can't remember. I
21 don't --

22 Q. But did you send another engine down to
23 him?

24 A. I did. I sent -- I don't know if it
25 went to the same place. I think the second one

1 went to another place. I'm not sure.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. But I sent him a second engine.

4 Q. Yeah. Well, you did not go down to
5 North Charleston to see about it, did you?

6 A. No, sir.

7 Q. Did anyone from 301 go down to North
8 Charleston to see what was wrong with the first
9 engine?

10 A. Not that I'm aware of, no, sir.

11 Q. And was the first engine returned to
12 your company, 301? The one that had gone bad or
13 wouldn't work?

14 A. I'm pretty sure they picked the first
15 engine up when they deliver the second one. I'm
16 not sure. I can't remember.

17 Q. Well, if you did pick it up, would you
18 have picked it up in North Charleston? Would you
19 have done that or somebody else?

20 A. I wouldn't have done that, no, sir. I
21 work at the office everyday.

22 Q. All right. Well, I'm just trying to
23 figure out if you know, maybe you don't, how --
24 how does the second engine get delivered and how
25 does the first engine -- what happens to the

1 first engine?

2 A. When you say first engine, is that the
3 engine out of the car or the first engine I
4 delivered to him?

5 Q. That you delivered to him.

6 A. The first engine should have been picked
7 up whenever they took the second engine if they
8 had it out. If they didn't have -- the shop
9 didn't have the first engine out, they would've
10 called and we would pick it up.

11 Q. Okay. But in any case, your company
12 would've picked it up -- somebody would from your
13 company?

14 A. Supposedly, yes, sir. I can't remember
15 every specific about it. It's been a long time.

16 Q. I understand. I understand that. I'm
17 just asking you questions so we'll know what you
18 know. That's -- and I don't want to try to
19 answer a question you don't know the answer to
20 for whatever reason.

21 Well, what -- did you examine the
22 defective engine that was brought back to 301,
23 which would've been the first one that you sold?

24 A. No, sir. I'm just a salesman. I don't
25 examine the cars.

1 Q. Do you know who examined that engine to
2 find out what was wrong with it, if anybody did?

3 A. I don't know.

4 Q. What does the company, 301, normally do
5 when an engine is returned -- a defective or
6 problematic engine is returned to it? What is
7 the process for getting it back in inventory, if
8 that is done?

9 A. If it's defective, they usually core it.
10 It's not put back in inventory.

11 Q. You just dispose of it somehow?

12 A. Yes, sir.

13 Q. That's an interesting question, not that
14 it's got much to do with this, but what do they
15 do with one they just want to get rid of? Is it
16 sold for scrap or something?

17 A. I know they go in a bin. I don't know
18 what they do with them.

19 Q. They go in a what?

20 A. They go in a bin. I don't know what
21 they do with them.

22 Q. Okay. Does this happen very often that
23 you sell a defective engine that has to be
24 brought back?

25 A. No, sir.

1 Q. All right. And so the second engine was
2 sent to the same place as the first engine; is
3 that correct?

4 A. I don't think so. I'm not sure. There
5 should be an invoice for it. Without looking at
6 the invoice, I can't tell you exactly where it
7 went.

8 Q. All right. Are you aware of what
9 happened to the automobile after the second
10 engine was installed?

11 A. Yes. I remember him calling me and
12 telling me that his car burnt.

13 Q. All right. Did he give you any details
14 of that?

15 A. Not -- no. Not that I remember. He
16 just told me that the car burnt up.

17 Q. Did he say that the engine caught on
18 fire or not?

19 A. I don't remember exactly what he said.
20 All I know is that he told me that the car burnt.

21 Q. And what did you say to him when he made
22 that report?

23 A. I asked him what did he want me to do.

24 Q. And what did he say?

25 A. He didn't really -- he didn't ever

1 really say. I mean, I don't know. He told me
2 that he had a warranty, a 180-day warranty.

3 Q. Yeah.

4 A. And I told him that, you know, the
5 engine wasn't burnt when he received it. You
6 know, I didn't know what he wanted me to do.

7 Q. Well, does the company have a policy of
8 replacing engines that -- in a circumstance like
9 this?

10 MS. VARNADO: Objection. You can
11 go ahead and answer.

12 Q. Did you understand my question, Mr. Lee?

13 A. My computer went off. I was waiting on
14 it to come back on.

15 Q. I'm sorry. Did you understand the
16 question that I asked you just now?

17 A. You can ask it one more time, if you
18 don't mind.

19 Q. Well, I'm trying to remember what I
20 asked. What is the policy of 301 to do when an
21 engine that is sold to a customer catches on fire
22 and burns the car up?

23 MS. VARNADO: Objection.

24 Q. What is the policy of the company?

25 A. I don't know. We've never had one do

1 this before.

2 Q. Okay. So far as you know, there's no
3 policy or am I wrong or is there a policy?

4 A. I don't know. This is the first time
5 that anybody's car's burnt and they want us to do
6 something about it. I don't -- I don't know.

7 Q. So you don't know what the policy is, if
8 there is one?

9 A. No, sir.

10 Q. Okay. After the fire in the car that
11 Mr. Hamilton told you about, did you tell him
12 what he ought to do or give him any advice or
13 instructions as to what to do about the car and
14 the engine?

15 A. Not that I'm aware of, no. Like I said,
16 I can't remember what we talked about on the
17 phone a year ago.

18 Q. Did he appear to be upset that the car
19 had burned up -- the engine in the car had burned
20 up?

21 A. I don't know. I mean, I imagine he was
22 upset. I don't know how he felt.

23 Q. Okay. Have you had any complaints about
24 Kia engines generally that you've sold?

25 A. No, sir.

1 Q. Besides your dealing with Mr. Hamilton?

2 A. No, sir.

3 Q. Have you ever given a -- I might've
4 asked you this. Have you ever given a deposition
5 like this before?

6 A. No, sir.

7 Q. All right. Have you been aware of any
8 claims that have been made against 301 Auto Parts
9 for defective engines, other than this case?

10 A. I don't know. I'm not aware.

11 Q. You're not aware of -- are you aware of
12 any?

13 A. I don't know. I don't know if any's
14 ever been made or not. I'm just a salesman.

15 Q. Okay. Did 301 charge Mr. Hamilton
16 anything for the second engine that was sent to
17 him?

18 A. I don't remember it. There should be an
19 invoice for it. I don't know without looking at
20 the invoice. I'm not sure. I can't answer that.
21 I don't know.

22 Q. Don't know. All right. Bear with me
23 for just a minute. I'm trying to save a little
24 time. I think I asked you this. I know I asked
25 you whether you checked on a computer for Kia

1 recalls, and I think you said you didn't, but if
2 I'm wrong, correct that, but have you ever
3 checked for recalls on any engine that you've
4 sold before selling it -- before delivering it,
5 to your knowledge?

6 A. No, sir, not that I'm aware of.

7 Q. All right. Is there anything that
8 prevents you from doing that if you wanted to?

9 A. One more -- what's the question one more
10 time. What's the question?

11 Q. I asked you earlier just now before this
12 whether you checked on your computer about
13 recalls, and you said, no, you hadn't, I think
14 was your answer. You had not done that. Is that
15 a correct answer that you gave?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. All right. This is a follow-up to that.
18 I think my question was could you do that if you
19 decided you wanted to?

20 A. Our phone never quits ringing. I mean,
21 I don't have time to check every engine or every
22 thing that we sell. There's no way.

23 Q. If someone in the company that was ahead
24 of you in the structure, like Mr. Ard for
25 example, if he told you to check to see if this

1 engine have been recalled by a particular
2 company, would you be able to do that?

3 A. So what's the question?

4 Q. The question is: If Mr. Ard asked you
5 to check -- make a search to see if a particular
6 engine had been subject to a recall by its
7 manufacturer, would you be able to do that?

8 A. I would not have time, no, sir.

9 Q. Well, assuming you had the time, would
10 you be able to do it?

11 A. So assuming I had the time -- is that
12 the -- what's the question? Assuming I had the
13 time, would I be able to do it?

14 Q. Yeah.

15 A. I don't know.

16 Q. Well, I mean, why couldn't you if Mr.
17 Ard wanted you to?

18 MS. VARNADO: Objection.

19 Q. Are you able to answer that question,
20 Mr. Lee?

21 A. Okay. What was the question? The
22 computer keeps cutting off when you all object.

23 MR. TISDALE: Huh?

24 THE WITNESS: My computer goes
25 black when you all object.

1 MR. TISDALE: I'm not objecting.

2 MS. PINCKNEY: Christie did.

3 MR. TISDALE: Oh, did she object to
4 that question?

5 MS. PINCKNEY: Yeah.

6 MR. TISDALE: I didn't think she
7 did.

8 Q. (MR. TISDALE) Okay. All right. Just
9 to be clear then, I'm going to try one more time.
10 If Mr. Ard or someone else in the company with
11 authority asked you to check online if a
12 particular engine had been recalled by its
13 manufacturer, would you be able to do that and
14 meet that request and give them an answer?

15 A. No, sir.

16 Q. Why?

17 A. The phone never quits ringing. The
18 phone -- our phone never quits ringing here.
19 There is no way that I would have time to do
20 that.

21 Q. Okay. I haven't -- well, I won't get
22 into whether or not the phone's been ringing
23 during the deposition, but that's another matter.
24 But, Mr. Lee, I'm going to try one more time.

25 Assuming you had the time -- forget

1 about the time factor for this question. If Mr.
2 Ard or someone else in authority in the company
3 asked you to check online to see if a particular
4 engine had been recalled by its manufacturer
5 prior to the date this request was made, would
6 you be able to do that, assuming you had time to
7 do it?

8 A. I don't understand the question. This
9 is assuming that I would or -- I don't understand
10 the question you're asking.

11 Q. All right. I'm going to break it down.

12 If Mr. Ard says to you, or someone else
13 in authority, we have an order for an engine --
14 Mr. Ard's saying this or somebody like him --
15 will you go find out whether that engine has been
16 recalled by the manufacturer for any defects? Do
17 you understand what I've said so far? If Mr. Ard
18 or somebody asked you that question. Do you
19 understand that so far?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. Okay. And you are not otherwise
22 occupied with something else you had to do and
23 you had 30 minutes free time at that point, could
24 you go to your computer and check for Mr. Ard to
25 meet his request to see if that engine had been

1 recalled. Would you be capable of doing that?

2 A. I still don't really understand the
3 question. Are you asking me if my boss asked me
4 to do something, would I do it? I mean, I don't
5 understand what you're asking.

6 Q. Yes. Let's take that as number one.
7 Would you?

8 A. What's the question? I'm asking you
9 what your question is.

10 Q. Okay. You posed it quite nicely just
11 now. If Mr. Ard, or your boss, asked you to do
12 something, would you do it?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. Number one, we got that. Number two, if
15 the request was to go online on your computer,
16 would you be able to do that?

17 A. Yeah. I got a computer, yes, sir.

18 Q. Okay. And if the question was to go
19 online and search -- make a search to see if a
20 particular engine that 301 was getting ready to
21 sell had ever been recalled, could you do that
22 search?

23 A. No. I don't have time to do research,
24 sir.

25 Q. I didn't say research. I said search.

1 A. No.

2 Q. Do you know how to operate a computer?

3 A. I do.

4 Q. All right. And do you search things on
5 the computer to find out information?

6 A. No. Our computer system isn't searching
7 things. It's just inventory.

8 Q. Well, you search inventory, don't you?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. All right. And are you saying that you
11 could not answer Mr. Ard's question if he asked
12 you to find out if an engine had previously been
13 recalled?

14 A. Our computer doesn't say that, no. It's
15 just got the parts that we have in inventory.

16 Q. Okay. So then would I be correct that
17 you are unable to find out that information?

18 A. Yes. If that's the question you're
19 asking. I don't understand the question is what
20 I was trying to tell you a while ago.

21 Q. I've asked it about ten times, and I
22 don't think I'm going to ask it anymore. But I
23 think I just heard you say that the company has
24 no capability to find out whether an engine has
25 been recalled or not; am I correct?

1 MS. VARNADO: Objection.

2 Q. Am I correct?

3 MS. VARNADO: Same objection.

4 MR. TISDALE: She's objected, and
5 her objection's on the record, but you can still
6 answer. Christie, is your computer locked up
7 again?

8 MS. PINCKNEY: No. Timmy's is.

9 MS. VARNADO: No. I don't think
10 so.

11 MR. TISDALE: Just wanted to be
12 sure because we couldn't see you.

13 MS. PINCKNEY: Timmy's is though, I
14 think.

15 MR. TISDALE: Timmy, is yours
16 locked up?

17 THE WITNESS: No. I'm right here.

18 Q. (MR. TISDALE) Okay. Does the company
19 -- I'm going to ask this question one more time.
20 She's objected to it. Subject to her
21 objection -- and I think she would say answer it
22 if you can if you know the answer, and yes or no
23 would be fine if it can be answered that way.

24 Does 301 Auto Parts have the capability
25 of determining whether or not an engine it sells

1 to a customer has been previously recalled by the
2 engine's manufacturer?

3 A. I don't know. I know my computer shows
4 inventory. I don't know what everybody else's
5 does.

6 Q. All right. So the answer to my question
7 is -- am I correct -- is that you don't know?

8 A. That's correct.

9 Q. Good enough.

10 (Discussion off the record.)

11 MR. TISDALE: Christie, I don't
12 think we have anymore questions. Mr. Lee has
13 done a good job answering our questions, and we
14 appreciate it. And if you -- if your lawyer has
15 any questions, Mr. Lee, please answer them for
16 her.

17 MS. VARNADO: Thank you. No, I
18 don't have any questions. So we can end the
19 deposition.

20 MR. TISDALE: Thank you very much.

21 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

22 (The deposition was concluded at
23 12:22.)

24

25

1 CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER
2 STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
3 COUNTY OF KERSHAW

4 I, RACHAEL CLARK, Certified Verbatim
5 Reporter and Notary Public for the State of South
6 Carolina at Large, do hereby certify that the
7 witness in the foregoing deposition was by me
8 duly sworn to testify to the truth, the whole
9 truth and nothing but the truth in the
10 within-entitled cause; that said deposition was
11 taken at the time and location therein stated;
12 that the testimony of the witness and all
13 objections made at the time of the examination
14 were recorded by me and were thereafter
15 transcribed by computer-aided transcription; that
16 the foregoing is a full, complete and true record
17 of the testimony of the witness and of all
18 objections made at the time of the examination;
19 and that the witness was given an opportunity to
20 read and correct said deposition and to subscribe
21 the same.

22 Should the signature of the witness not
23 be affixed to the deposition, the witness shall
24 not have availed himself/herself of the
25 opportunity to sign or the signature has been
waived.

26 I further certify that I am neither
27 related to nor counsel for any party to the cause
28 pending or interested in the events thereof.

29 Witness my hand, I have hereunto affixed
30 my official seal on January 23, 2021 at Kershaw
31 County, South Carolina.

32

33

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39

RACHAEL CLARK
CERTIFIED VERBATIM REPORTER
CVR (South Carolina)
My Commission expires
September 23, 2030

WORD INDEX

< \$ >

\$1,828 11:23 25:19**\$100** 13:4 15:6, 12,
13, 14, 17, 23, 25
16:4, 7**\$1828** 11:24, 25
24:25

< 1 >

1 3:10 9:10, 13, 20
11:13 13:1 23:4**10** 1:17**105** 2:5**11:15** 1:17**11th** 25:22 26:3**12:22** 42:23**13** 17:18**148910** 9:15 11:15**180-day** 32:2**19** 25:22**1981** 7:16**1999** 7:14

< 2 >

2 3:11 12:11 25:4,
7, 9**2.4L** 20:1**200** 2:9**2010** 8:8**2013** 12:3**2019-CP-10-06567**
1:6**2020** 1:17 8:7**2021** 43:17**2030** 43:22**23** 43:17, 22**25** 3:11**29401** 2:6, 10**29405** 1:23

< 3 >

30 38:23**301** 1:11 3:10 8:2,
10, 11, 14, 23, 259:14 15:4, 22 16:3,
16, 20 17:23 20:11
21:11, 14, 19 22:14,
22 28:7, 12 29:2230:4 32:20 34:8,
15 39:20 41:24**38** 2:9

< 4 >

4 3:4**43** 3:6

< 5 >

5367 9:18

< 6 >

6/11/19 25:22

< 8 >

843-762-6294 1:23

< 9 >

9 3:10

< A >

able 5:17 20:14

36:2, 7, 10, 13, 19

37:13 38:6 39:16

access 10:20 21:10,
12**activities** 7:19**address** 18:18**administer** 5:12, 16**advice** 33:12**affixed** 43:13, 16**ago** 7:21 8:6
26:19 33:17 40:20**agree** 25:5**ahead** 5:12 32:11
35:23**allowed** 4:24**alternator** 14:13**amount** 11:23**answer** 21:22
22:19 29:19 32:11
34:20 35:14, 1536:19 37:14 40:11
41:6, 21, 22 42:6, 15**answered** 22:5

41:23

answering 42:13**anybody** 15:3

21:19 30:2

anybody's 33:5**anymore** 40:22
42:12**any's** 34:13**anyway** 7:1**apologize** 12:18**apparently** 13:3**appear** 33:18**appreciate** 42:14**Ard** 10:19, 24
23:19 35:24 36:4,
17 37:10 38:2, 12,
17, 24 39:11**Ard's** 38:14 40:11**asked** 18:8 22:15
27:17 31:23 32:16,
20 34:4, 24 35:1136:4 37:11 38:3,
18 39:3, 11 40:11,
21**asking** 4:8, 17 6:24
10:1 12:25 20:17
21:6 26:20 29:1738:10 39:3, 5, 8
40:19**aspect** 18:12
ASSEMBLY 12:12
13:3, 5**ASSOCIATES** 1:22
assume 18:8**assuming** 36:9, 11,
12 37:25 38:6, 9**authority** 37:11
38:2, 13**AUTO** 1:11 3:10
8:2, 12 9:14 21:11,
14, 19 22:14, 2234:8 41:24
automobile 9:3
31:9**available** 9:11
availed 43:13**aware** 28:10 31:8
33:15 34:7, 10, 11
35:6

< B >

back 12:23 15:16,
21 16:3, 16, 20 18:6,
23 19:4 23:11

26:1, 16 27:6

29:22 30:7, 10, 24
32:14**bad** 26:24 28:12**based** 25:13**Bear** 34:22**BEHALF** 2:3, 6**believe** 16:24**bin** 30:17, 20**bit** 11:6 22:4**black** 36:25**block** 12:10**Body** 15:2 18:10**bogged** 16:13**born** 6:10, 11, 18,
19, 24 7:15, 16**boss** 39:3, 11**bought** 8:20 11:23
17:21, 23**box** 21:2**break** 5:2 10:24
38:11**Broad** 2:5, 9**brought** 29:22
30:24**burned** 33:19**burns** 24:22 32:22
burnt 31:12, 16, 20
32:5 33:5**business** 20:16 21:7
buying 13:23 17:10

< C >

call 8:11 9:14**called** 18:9 29:10**calling** 27:19 31:11**capability** 40:24
41:24**capable** 39:1**car** 13:17, 19, 20, 25
14:9, 25 16:1529:3 31:12, 16, 20
32:22 33:10, 13, 18,
19**CAROLINA** 1:16:6, 12, 14 43:1, 4,
17, 21**cars** 8:17, 19 19:5
29:25**car's** 33:5

CASE 1:6 13:22
 23:15 24:7 27:7
 29:11 34:9
catch 22:9
catches 32:21
catching 20:8
caught 20:12 24:18
 31:17
cause 43:6, 15
caused 24:9
certain 4:17
certainly 5:3 12:21
 20:21
CERTIFICATE 3:6
 43:1
CERTIFIED 1:22
 43:2, 20
certify 43:4, 15
charge 12:14 13:3,
 9, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16
 14:3, 5 15:13, 14, 17,
 25 34:15
charged 15:6
charges 13:13
 14:14
CHARLESTON 1:2,
 23 2:6, 10 18:20
 23:16 28:5, 8, 18
Check 3:11 20:12,
 14 21:20 22:7, 15
 25:9, 13, 18 27:10
 35:21, 25 36:5
 37:11 38:3, 24
checked 34:25 35:3,
 12
checking 18:25
 27:11, 12
Christie 20:18 37:2
 41:6 42:11
CHRISTINE 2:9
circumstance 32:8
circumstances 26:14
City 7:3, 4, 8, 11
claims 34:8
clarify 4:16
CLARK 1:20, 22
 43:2, 20
clear 15:20 37:9
client 24:7

Come 8:19, 21
 16:20 22:3 32:14
comes 16:16
Commission 43:21
COMMON 1:1
COMPANION 2:9
company 4:4 8:11
 28:12 29:11, 13
 30:4 32:7, 24
 35:23 36:2 37:10
 38:2 40:23 41:18
company's 4:22
complaints 33:23
complete 43:9
completely 14:3
 15:16
Compressor 14:13
computer 10:20
 12:19 19:22 21:12,
 13 22:7, 12 23:5
 32:13 34:25 35:12
 36:22, 24 38:24
 39:15, 17 40:2, 5, 6,
 14 41:6 42:3
computer-aided 43:9
computers 21:7, 10
concluded 42:22
contacting 17:9
conversation 22:21
 26:18, 22
core 12:14, 17 13:9,
 11, 12, 13, 14, 16
 14:3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 12, 14
 15:14, 15, 16, 18, 21
 16:2, 3, 14, 21, 23, 25
 30:9
CORE-DUE 12:11
 13:5 15:11
CORE-TWO 13:2
correct 13:21
 14:20 24:6 25:1
 31:3 35:2, 15
 40:16, 25 41:2
 42:7, 8 43:11
counsel 43:15
COUNTY 1:2 43:2,
 17
course 17:5
COURT 1:1 5:10,
 13, 15

Coward 6:12, 14
 7:6, 7
crank 19:5, 8, 12
CULBREATH 1:6
customer 14:4
 15:15, 23 16:3
 23:9 27:3 32:21
 42:1
cutting 36:22
CVR 1:20 43:21

< D >
DATE 1:17 8:5
 9:5 38:5
dated 25:22
day 23:14 25:23,
 24 26:4
dealing 34:1
DECEMBER 1:17
decided 35:19
defective 29:22
 30:5, 9, 23 34:9
defects 26:9 38:16
Defendant 1:11 2:6
deliver 28:15
delivered 18:6
 23:14 25:21 28:24
 29:4, 5
delivering 35:4
DEPONENT 1:11
DEPOSITION 1:2
 4:23, 25 5:6 9:7, 9
 11:1 34:4 37:23
 42:19, 22 43:5, 6, 11,
 13
described 24:8
DESCRIPTION 3:9
details 31:13
determining 41:25
Different 14:13, 14
discretion 14:6
Discussion 16:11
 17:1 42:10
dispose 30:11
doing 35:8 39:1
due 13:2
duly 5:21 43:5

< E >

earlier 35:11
either 16:16
else's 42:4
e-mail 10:22
emissions 20:1
engine 4:11, 12 9:2
 11:18, 23 12:1, 11,
 15 13:3, 5, 10, 11, 12,
 16, 19, 23, 24 14:1, 5,
 8, 12, 18, 19, 24 15:1,
 12, 18, 22 16:15
 17:10 18:17 19:19
 20:4 22:23 23:8,
 12, 22, 24 24:1, 3, 8,
 15, 18, 25 25:13, 17,
 25 26:8, 15, 24 27:4,
 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 18,
 22 28:3, 9, 11, 15, 24,
 25 29:1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 9,
 22 30:1, 5, 6, 23
 31:1, 2, 10, 17 32:5,
 21 33:14, 19 34:16
 35:3, 21 36:1, 6
 37:12 38:4, 13, 15,
 25 39:20 40:12, 24
 41:25
engines 12:5 13:13
 14:13 18:25 19:12
 20:8, 12 21:21
 22:8, 22 32:8
 33:24 34:9
engine's 42:2
ensure 19:19
enter 4:5
events 43:16
everybody 42:4
everyday 21:15, 16
 28:21
exact 8:5 9:5
exactly 6:22 8:20
 18:14 19:15, 21
 27:2 31:6, 19
EXAMINATION
 3:2 4:1 43:8, 10
examine 29:21, 25
examined 5:21 30:1
example 35:25
exclamation 9:18
Excuse 18:24

Exhibit 9:10, 13, 20, 24 10:8, 10, 17 11:13 13:1 16:9 23:4 25:4, 7, 9
EXHIBITS 3:8 9:7 10:25
experience 7:5 12:4, 8 18:22, 24
expires 43:21
explain 13:4
explained 15:11
Extension 9:18
extent 17:4

< F >
factor 38:1
far 17:20 33:2 38:17, 19
Federal 20:1
feel 4:21
felt 33:22
figure 13:7 14:11 28:23
find 10:24 30:2 38:15 40:5, 12, 17, 24
fine 5:24 41:23
finish 7:10
fire 20:9, 13 22:9, 23 24:19 31:18 32:21 33:10
FIRM 2:6
first 5:21 6:2 18:23 24:25 25:25 26:16 27:12 28:8, 11, 14, 25 29:1, 2, 3, 6, 9, 23 31:2 33:4
fixed 12:20
Floor 2:5
Florence 6:11, 16, 18, 19, 25
fluids 24:15
follows 5:22
follow-up 35:17
foregoing 43:5, 9
forget 37:25
forth 24:9
free 38:23
freeze 20:24

freezing 12:19
front 10:11, 14
full 43:9
further 43:15

< G >
generally 33:24
getting 11:12, 21 14:1 30:7 39:20
give 15:21, 22 16:2 24:18 27:4, 6 31:13 33:12 37:14
given 5:6 34:3, 4 43:11
go 5:11 7:2 10:24 11:8, 14 18:23 19:22 26:16 28:4, 7 30:17, 19, 20 32:11 38:15, 24 39:15, 18
goes 36:24
going 4:8, 15 5:16, 19 8:10 11:8 12:22 17:3 37:9, 24 38:11 40:22 41:19
good 19:1, 20, 23 20:2, 3 42:9, 13
gotten 26:4
grow 6:8
guess 9:10, 14 20:18, 20
guys 18:5 23:10

< H >
HAMILTON 1:2 4:7 9:3 11:19 13:23 14:19 17:9 18:8 23:3, 8 24:24 25:12, 16 26:12, 14, 17 27:18 33:11 34:1, 15
hand 5:17 43:16
handed 10:2
happen 30:22
happened 31:9
happens 23:8 28:25
head 24:4
hear 20:25 25:15

heard 20:6 22:20 40:23
heat 23:13, 19, 21 24:9, 12, 14, 17
HELLMAN 2:3
hereunto 43:16
high 7:10, 17
himself/herself 43:13
Hold 26:1
hope 9:11
hospital 6:19, 21, 22
hot 23:24 24:2, 15
Huh 36:23

< I >
identification 9:21 25:8
III 1:2
imagine 33:21
import 26:21
included 25:3
INDEX 3:1
indicate 24:10
indication 24:18
individual 20:16
information 4:10 20:7 40:5, 17
inspect 19:9, 13
install 14:1
installed 31:10
instructions 33:13
insurance 4:4
interested 43:16
interesting 30:13
interrupt 5:14
interruption 12:24 21:4
inventory 30:7, 10 40:7, 8, 15 42:4
Invoice 3:10 9:14, 15, 16 11:13, 15, 16 13:1, 6 17:17, 18, 19 19:23, 24 22:4 23:3, 7 24:25 25:21, 22 26:2 31:5, 6 34:19, 20
issue 16:13
issued 21:20 22:8
issues 12:19

its 36:6 37:12 38:4

< J >
January 43:17
Jenkins 15:1 18:9 23:16
job 8:10, 14, 22 42:13
June 25:22

< K >
keep 14:4
keeps 15:15 36:22
kept 16:16
KERSHAW 43:2, 17
Kia 9:3 12:3 17:18 20:8 22:7, 22 33:24 34:25
kind 12:1 20:8
know 4:16, 23 5:3 6:22 8:5, 20 9:5, 7, 25 10:19, 20 13:6 14:25 17:7, 8, 20 18:17 19:11, 15, 17, 22 20:13, 20 21:18, 22, 23 22:5, 14, 17, 18 23:11 24:1, 20, 21, 22, 23 26:23 27:1, 12, 16, 20, 24 28:23 29:17, 18, 19 30:1, 3, 17, 20 31:20 32:1, 4, 6, 25 33:2, 4, 6, 7, 21, 22 34:10, 13, 19, 21, 22, 24 36:15 40:2 41:22 42:3, 4, 7
knowledge 12:6 35:5
knows 20:18

< L >
Lake 7:3, 4, 8, 11
Landscaping 7:24 8:1
language 13:1
Large 43:4
latest 25:24
LAW 2:6
lawyer 4:4, 21, 22

42:14
learn 16:25
LEE 1:2, 11 4:3
 5:16, 20 16:17
 21:2, 5 26:17
 32:12 36:20 37:24
 42:12, 15
life 7:18
little 6:14, 16 11:6
 12:10 21:2 22:4
 34:23
live 6:2, 4 7:4
lived 6:8 7:6, 7
LLC 1:11
loaded 18:6 23:13
LOCATION 1:20
 43:7
locked 41:6, 16
long 5:1 6:1 29:15
LONNIE 1:2 4:7
 11:19
look 10:25 11:14
 17:16 19:23 25:5
looked 21:19
looking 9:10 11:22
 23:4 31:5 34:19
lot 6:25

< M >
making 18:3
manufacturer 36:7
 37:13 38:4, 16 42:2
marked 9:6, 20
 25:7
marks 9:18
matter 5:18 37:23
McLeod 6:21
mean 10:14 12:12
 13:23, 25 16:18
 18:14 24:6, 22
 32:1 33:21 35:20
 36:16 39:4
means 13:5, 8
meet 37:14 38:25
message 26:21
messes 24:5
met 4:7
might've 34:3
mind 32:18

minute 18:24 23:20
 34:23
minutes 38:23
money 27:6
Motors 22:7
moved 7:21

< N >
name 8:11 9:16
near 6:16
need 4:21 5:1
 11:3 16:13, 24
 17:17 20:23 25:5
needed 14:19
neither 43:15
never 16:23 32:25
 35:20 37:17, 18
new 13:23, 24 14:2,
 20, 21
nicely 39:10
Nine 27:2
normally 30:4
North 18:20 23:16
 28:5, 7, 18
Notary 43:4
notes 9:17
notified 26:7, 11
Number 9:10, 15
 11:15 12:11 39:6,
 14
numbers 9:8

< O >
oath 5:12
object 36:22, 25
 37:3
objected 41:4, 20
objecting 37:1
objection 4:5 19:10
 20:15 32:10, 23
 36:18 41:1, 3, 21
objections 43:8, 10
objection's 41:5
Obviously 21:6
occasionally 4:5
occupied 38:22
offered 20:16
office 19:16 28:21
Office@clark-

associates.com 1:24
Official 3:11 43:17
Oh 6:7 37:3
Okay 5:4, 5, 9, 23,
 24 7:7, 10, 17 8:25
 9:6 10:18 11:4, 7
 12:10 13:22 14:15
 15:17, 19, 24 16:8
 18:3, 16 20:6, 21
 21:13 22:11, 20
 23:1, 25 24:12, 24
 25:11 28:2 29:11
 30:22 33:2, 10, 23
 34:15 36:21 37:8,
 21 38:21 39:10, 18
 40:16 41:18
Olanta 6:2
old 12:15 13:9, 11
 14:19, 24 15:12, 22
 21:2
online 21:19 22:7
 37:11 38:3 39:15,
 19
operate 40:2
opportunity 43:11,
 14
Optima 12:3 17:18
option 14:6
order 9:17 18:1
 19:1, 20 23:9 38:13
ordered 17:12, 16
 18:17
ought 33:12
overheats 24:3

< P >
P.A 2:3
PAGE 3:2, 9
paid 24:25
Paint 15:1 18:10
Pamplico 6:4, 6, 7
paper 9:8
part 11:1
particular 7:1 17:4
 36:1, 5 37:12 38:3
 39:20
PARTS 1:11 3:10
 8:2, 12, 17, 18 9:14
 14:14 21:11, 14, 19

22:15, 22 34:8
 40:15 41:24
party 43:15
pay 14:5 25:12, 17
pending 43:16
people 19:4, 8
 21:23 22:21, 22
phone 18:15 33:17
 35:20 37:17, 18
phone's 37:22
physically 14:24
pick 28:17 29:10
picked 28:14, 18
 29:6, 12
picture 20:20, 23
pieces 9:8
PINCKNEY 2:10
 10:3 16:6 37:2, 5
 41:8, 13
place 18:9 23:13
 27:25 28:1 31:2
PLAINTIFF 2:3
Plaintiffs 1:6
PLEAS 1:1
please 4:16 12:20
 42:15
point 26:8 38:23
policy 32:7, 20, 24
 33:3, 7
posed 39:10
possibilities 22:24
prepare 11:15
prepared 23:3, 7
PRESENT 2:10
pretty 28:14
prevents 35:8
previously 40:12
 42:1
price 25:5
Print 11:2
prior 38:5
Probably 11:5 12:7
problem 17:8 20:8
problematic 30:6
problems 19:2 24:7
process 14:11
 19:14, 21 27:14, 15
 30:7
prone 22:9

proper 24:15
Public 43:4
pull 23:10
purpose 24:12
put 9:8 23:22
 24:16 26:23 30:10

< Q >

quality 27:13
question 4:16 15:8
 22:5 24:11 25:14
 29:19 30:13 32:12,
 16 35:9, 10, 18 36:3,
 4, 12, 19, 21 37:4
 38:1, 8, 10, 18 39:3,
 8, 9, 18 40:11, 18, 19
 41:19 42:6
questions 4:6, 9
 17:3 29:17 42:12,
 13, 15, 18
quit 8:1
quite 39:10
quits 35:20 37:17,
 18

< R >

RACHAEL 1:20
 43:2, 20
raise 5:17
raised 6:12, 13
ran 19:23 20:1, 3
read 43:11
reading 15:10
ready 11:12 39:20
really 12:8 24:11
 26:18 31:25 32:1
 39:2
reason 4:22 5:2
 29:20
recall 4:9 9:2, 4
 11:11 17:19 36:6
recalled 36:1 37:12
 38:4, 16 39:1, 21
 40:13, 25 42:1
recalls 21:20 22:8,
 23 35:1, 3, 13
received 20:7
 25:23 32:5
receiving 18:1
Recess 11:10

record 11:21 16:11
 17:1 22:6 41:5
 42:10 43:9
recorded 43:8
refer 9:9 25:17
referring 20:4
refund 15:23 16:4,
 7, 9
related 43:15
remember 8:4 17:5,
 9, 11, 15 18:14
 26:18 27:17, 20
 28:16 29:14 31:11,
 15, 19 32:19 33:16
 34:18
REMOTE 1:20
remove 13:19
removed 13:25
repeat 15:9
replaced 4:12
replacing 14:10
 32:8
report 31:22
REPORTED 1:20
REPORTER 1:22
 3:6 5:10, 13, 15
 43:1, 4, 20
represent 4:7
represented 4:3
request 37:14 38:5,
 25 39:15
research 39:23, 25
returned 28:11
 30:5, 6
rid 14:1 30:15
right 5:17 6:1
 7:25 8:16, 22
 10:11 12:4 14:10,
 15, 21, 23 15:3, 6
 16:5, 10, 17, 25 17:2,
 15, 25 18:2 19:7, 17
 20:3, 19 21:16, 18
 22:3 23:1, 15
 24:10, 17 25:3, 20
 26:5, 7, 13, 20 28:22
 31:1, 8, 13 34:7, 22
 35:7, 17 37:8
 38:11 40:4, 10
 41:17 42:6

ringing 35:20
 37:17, 18, 22
room 14:9, 20
run 23:24 24:2, 15
Russell 15:1 18:9
 23:16
 < S >
sale 11:18
salesman 8:15, 21,
 23 19:4, 6, 20 27:16
 29:24 34:14
salesmen 8:25
SARAH 2:10
save 11:5 34:23
saying 13:18 38:14
 40:10
says 9:13, 16 12:3,
 11 13:2 15:10, 12
 17:18 19:23, 25
 20:1 38:12
SC 1:23 2:6, 10
school 7:2, 5, 8, 10,
 18
scrap 30:16
seal 43:17
search 36:5 39:19,
 22, 25 40:4, 8
searching 40:6
second 27:11, 25
 28:3, 15, 24 29:7
 31:1, 9 34:16
see 5:23, 24 12:12,
 20 16:1 18:25
 19:8, 12, 24 20:12,
 25 21:1, 2, 20 22:7
 28:5, 8 35:25 36:5
 38:3, 25 39:19
 41:12
seeing 20:19, 23
seen 16:23
SEIBELS 2:6
sell 8:16 30:23
 35:22 39:21
selling 9:2, 4 19:19
 35:4
sells 21:21 41:25
send 15:2 18:18
 27:4, 22

sending 26:22
sends 15:15
sent 10:19, 21 15:1
 23:15 27:8, 13, 24
 28:3 31:2 34:16
September 43:22
shelf 23:12
ship 18:9
shipped 25:23 26:2
shop 16:18 18:10
 23:17 26:23 29:8
show 10:25
shows 16:9 42:3
sign 43:14
signature 43:12, 14
significance 23:25
sir 4:19 5:8, 25
 6:4, 9, 17, 20 7:6, 9,
 12 8:9, 13, 24 9:22
 10:12, 17 11:17, 20,
 25 15:5 16:23
 17:12, 14, 22, 24
 18:21 19:3 20:5,
 10 21:9, 15, 17, 22
 22:1, 10 26:10, 19
 28:6, 10, 20 29:14,
 24 30:12, 25 33:9,
 25 34:2, 6 35:6
 36:8 37:15 39:17,
 24
situation 7:1
sold 4:11 12:2, 7, 9
 14:18 18:25 29:23
 30:16 32:21 33:24
 35:4
somebody 28:19
 29:12 38:14, 18
sorry 5:13 13:2
 25:14, 16 32:15
sort 16:9
SOUTH 1:1 6:6, 12,
 14 43:1, 4, 17, 21
speak 4:21
speaking 17:11
specific 29:15
spoke 18:15
standby 12:22
start 11:14
started 8:23

STATE 1:1 43:1, 4
stated 43:7
stock 12:11
Street 2:5, 9
strike 19:18
structure 35:24
stuff 19:5 24:4
subject 22:23 36:6 41:20
subscribe 43:11
Suite 2:9
Supposedly 29:14
sure 19:21 24:14 28:1, 14, 16 31:4 34:20 41:12
swear 5:18
sworn 5:21 43:5
system 40:6

< T >
tabs 23:13, 20, 21 24:10, 13, 14, 17
take 5:1 10:23 11:9 13:19 14:23, 24 15:7 23:12 39:6
taken 14:9, 19 43:7
talked 23:19 33:16
talking 12:13 14:17 25:4
Technical 12:24 21:4
telephone 17:13, 14
tell 5:18 14:15 17:6 23:23 26:13, 17 27:3 31:6 33:11 40:20
telling 31:12
ten 7:21 8:6 27:2 40:21
testified 5:22
testify 43:5
testimony 43:7, 10
Thank 42:17, 20, 21
Thanks 9:17
thereof 43:16
thing 35:22
things 19:14 40:4, 7
think 4:8, 25 14:16 16:12, 24 21:5 27:25 31:4 34:24

35:1, 13, 18 37:6
 40:22, 23 41:9, 14, 21 42:12
Third 2:5
THOMAS 2:5
Three 9:1, 17
ticket 18:2, 4 23:10
TIME 1:17 11:6, 9 15:9 29:15 32:17 33:4 34:24 35:10, 21 36:8, 9, 11, 13 37:9, 19, 24, 25 38:1, 6, 23 39:23 41:19 43:7, 8, 10
times 27:2 40:21
TIMMY 1:2, 11 5:20 9:18 41:15
Timmy's 41:8, 13
TISDALE 2:3, 5 3:4 4:2, 6 5:10, 11, 15, 23 9:25 10:5, 9, 13 11:2, 5, 8, 11 12:21, 25 15:24 16:5, 8, 12 17:2 20:17 21:1, 5 36:23 37:1, 3, 6, 8 41:4, 11, 15, 18 42:11, 20
today 4:3
told 15:2 16:8 18:17 27:1, 2 31:16, 20 32:1, 4 33:11 35:25
Tom 4:6 20:16
top 9:13
town 6:15, 16
transaction 17:4 23:2
transactions 4:10
transcribed 43:9
transcription 43:9
truck 18:6 23:14
true 43:9
truth 5:18 43:5, 6
try 4:15 17:6 29:18 37:9, 24
trying 13:7 14:11 28:22 32:19 34:23 40:20

turn 23:12
Two 13:2, 5 39:14

< U >
unable 40:17
unclear 16:14
understand 4:14, 17 14:7, 16 15:8 16:15 23:2 24:11 29:16 32:12, 15 38:8, 9, 17, 19 39:2, 5 40:19
understanding 13:18
upset 33:18, 22
use 20:13 21:7, 13, 15, 16
usually 30:9

< V >
valves 24:4, 8
VARNADO 2:9 4:4 9:23 10:7, 18, 23 12:18 15:20 16:2, 10 19:10 20:15, 22 32:10, 23 36:18 41:1, 3, 9 42:17
VERBATIM 1:22 43:2, 20
VIDEOCONFEREN
CE 1:20
vs 1:6

< W >
wait 12:23
waiting 32:13
waived 43:14
want 4:13 5:11 14:4 23:20 24:1 25:18 29:18 30:15 31:23 33:5
wanted 17:16 20:14 32:6 35:8, 19 36:17 41:11
warehouse 23:11
warps 24:4
warranty 32:2
wash 23:11, 12

way 15:10 20:11 23:23 35:22 37:19 41:23
Well 6:11 7:20 15:10 21:13 23:9 25:21 26:16, 20 28:4, 17, 22 29:21 32:7, 19 36:9, 16 37:21 40:8
went 7:7 27:25 28:1 31:7 32:13
we're 11:22 12:22 20:19 25:4
We've 32:25
within-entitled 43:6
WITNESS 10:11, 16, 21 11:4, 7 36:24 41:17 42:21 43:5, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16
word 26:19, 20, 21
words 15:25 17:6
work 7:24 8:2 19:16 26:9, 15 28:13, 21
worked 7:20, 22
working 19:1, 20
would've 8:7 29:9, 12, 23
wrong 14:16 27:18 28:8 30:2 33:3 35:2
WWW.CLARK-ASSOCIATES.COM 1:24

< Y >
YATES 2:3
Yeah 5:11 6:7 9:15 12:14 16:18, 22 20:3, 22, 24 25:10 26:4 28:4 32:3 36:14 37:5 39:17
year 7:13, 15 8:3 26:19 33:17
years 7:21 8:6

< Z >
ZOE'LIA 1:6

WORD LIST

< \$ >

\$1,828 (2)

\$100 (10)

\$1828 (3)

< 1 >

1 (7)

10 (1)

105 (1)

11:15 (1)

11th (2)

12:22 (1)

13 (1)

148910 (2)

180-day (1)

19 (1)

1981 (1)

1999 (1)

< 2 >

2 (5)

2.4L (1)

200 (1)

2010 (1)

2013 (1)

2019-CP-10-06567
(1)

2020 (2)

2021 (1)

2030 (1)

23 (2)

25 (1)

29401 (2)

29405 (1)

< 3 >

30 (1)

301 (31)

38 (1)

< 4 >

4 (1)

43 (1)

< 5 >

5367 (1)

< 6 >

6/11/19 (1)

< 8 >

843-762-6294 (1)

< 9 >

9 (1)

< A >

able (10)

access (3)

activities (1)

address (1)

administer (2)

advice (1)

affixed (2)

ago (5)

agree (1)

ahead (3)

allowed (1)

alternator (1)

amount (1)

answer (16)

answered (2)

answering (1)

anybody (3)

anybody's (1)

anymore (2)

any's (1)

anyway (1)

apologize (1)

apparently (1)

appear (1)

appreciate (1)

Ard (12)

Ard's (2)

asked (18)

asking (14)

aspect (1)

ASSEMBLY (3)

ASSOCIATES (1)

assume (1)

assuming (6)

authority (3)

AUTO (12)

automobile (2)

available (1)

availed (1)

aware (8)

< B >

back (18)

bad (2)

based (1)

Bear (1)

BEHALF (2)

believe (1)

bin (2)

bit (2)

black (1)

block (1)

Body (2)

bogged (1)

born (7)

boss (2)

bought (4)

box (1)

break (3)

Broad (2)

brought (2)

burned (2)

burns (2)

burnt (5)

business (2)

buying (2)

< C >

call (2)

called (2)

calling (2)

capability (2)

capable (1)

car (16)

CAROLINA (8)

cars (4)

car's (1)

CASE (7)

catch (1)

catches (1)

catching (1)

caught (3)

cause (2)

caused (1)

certain (1)

certainly (3)

CERTIFICATE (2)

CERTIFIED (3)

certify (2)

charge (16)

charged (1)

charges (2)

CHARLESTON (9)

Check (16)

checked (3)

checking (3)

Christie (4)

CHRISTINE (1)

circumstance (1)

circumstances (1)

City (4)

claims (1)

clarify (1)

CLARK (4)

clear (2)

client (1)

Come (5)

comes (1)

Commission (1)

COMMON (1)

COMPANION (1)

company (14)

company's (1)

complaints (1)

complete (1)

completely (2)

Compressor (1)

computer (22)

computer-aided (1)

computers (2)

concluded (1)

contacting (1)

conversation (3)

core (30)

CORE-DUE (3)

CORE-TWO (1)

correct (13)

counsel (1)

COUNTY (3)

course (1)

COURT (4)

Coward (4)

crank (4)

CULBREATH (1)

customer (8)

cutting (1)

CVR (2)

< D >

DATE (4)
 dated (1)
 day (4)
 dealing (1)
 DECEMBER (1)
 decided (1)
 defective (5)
 defects (2)
 Defendant (2)
 deliver (1)
 delivered (6)
 delivering (1)
 DEPONENT (1)
 DEPOSITION (15)
 described (1)
 DESCRIPTION (1)
 details (1)
 determining (1)
 Different (3)
 discretion (1)
 Discussion (3)
 dispose (1)
 doing (2)
 due (2)
 duly (2)

< E >

earlier (1)
 either (1)
 else's (1)
 e-mail (1)
 emissions (1)
 engine (102)
 engines (13)
 engine's (1)
 ensure (1)
 enter (1)
 events (1)
 everybody (1)
 everyday (3)
 exact (2)
 exactly (8)
 EXAMINATION (4)
 examine (2)
 examined (2)
 example (1)

exclamation (1)
 Excuse (1)
 Exhibit (14)
 EXHIBITS (3)
 experience (5)
 expires (1)
 explain (1)
 explained (1)
 Extension (1)
 extent (1)

< F >

factor (1)
 far (4)
 Federal (1)
 feel (1)
 felt (1)
 figure (3)
 find (7)
 fine (2)
 finish (1)
 fire (8)
 FIRM (1)
 first (19)
 fixed (1)
 Floor (1)
 Florence (5)
 fluids (1)
 follows (1)
 follow-up (1)
 foregoing (2)
 forget (1)
 forth (1)
 free (1)
 freeze (1)
 freezing (1)
 front (2)
 full (1)
 further (1)

< G >

generally (1)
 getting (5)
 give (10)
 given (4)
 go (18)
 goes (1)
 going (13)
 good (7)

gotten (1)
 grow (1)
 guess (4)
 guys (2)

< H >

HAMILTON (20)
 hand (2)
 handed (1)
 happen (1)
 happened (1)
 happens (2)
 head (1)
 hear (2)
 heard (4)
 heat (9)
 HELLMAN (1)
 hereunto (1)
 high (2)
 himself/herself (1)
 Hold (1)
 hope (1)
 hospital (3)
 hot (3)
 Huh (1)

< I >

identification (2)
 III (1)
 imagine (1)
 import (1)
 included (1)
 INDEX (1)
 indicate (1)
 indication (1)
 individual (1)
 information (4)
 inspect (2)
 install (1)
 installed (1)
 instructions (1)
 insurance (1)
 interested (1)
 interesting (1)
 interrupt (1)
 interruption (2)
 inventory (6)
 Invoice (25)
 issue (1)

issued (2)
 issues (1)
 its (3)

< J >

January (1)
 Jenkins (3)
 job (4)
 June (1)

< K >

keep (1)
 keeps (2)
 kept (1)
 KERSHAW (2)
 Kia (8)
 kind (2)
 know (80)
 knowledge (2)
 knows (1)

< L >

Lake (4)
 Landscaping (2)
 language (1)
 Large (1)
 latest (1)
 LAW (1)
 lawyer (4)
 learn (1)
 LEE (14)
 life (1)
 little (7)
 live (3)
 lived (3)
 LLC (1)
 loaded (2)
 LOCATION (2)
 locked (2)
 long (3)
 LONNIE (3)
 look (5)
 looked (1)
 looking (5)
 lot (1)

< M >

making (1)
 manufacturer (5)

marked (3)
marks (1)
matter (2)
McLeod (1)
mean (14)
means (2)
meet (2)
message (1)
messes (1)
met (1)
might've (1)
mind (1)
minute (3)
minutes (1)
money (1)
Motors (1)
moved (1)

< N >

name (2)
near (1)
need (8)
needed (1)
neither (1)
never (5)
new (6)
nicely (1)
Nine (1)
normally (1)
North (5)
Notary (1)
notes (1)
notified (2)
Number (7)
numbers (1)

< O >

oath (1)
object (3)
objected (2)
objecting (1)
objection (9)
objections (2)
objection's (1)
Obviously (1)
occasionally (1)
occupied (1)
offered (1)
office (2)

Office@clark-
associates.com (1)
Official (2)
Oh (2)
Okay (47)
Olanta (1)
old (8)
online (6)
operate (1)
opportunity (2)
Optima (2)
option (1)
order (6)
ordered (3)
ought (1)
overheats (1)

< P >

P.A (1)
PAGE (2)
paid (1)
Paint (2)
Pamplico (3)
paper (1)
part (1)
particular (7)
PARTS (16)
party (1)
pay (3)
pending (1)
people (5)
phone (6)
phone's (1)
physically (1)
pick (2)
picked (4)
picture (2)
pieces (1)
PINCKNEY (7)
place (5)
PLAINTIFF (1)
Plaintiffs (1)
PLEAS (1)
please (3)
point (2)
policy (6)
posed (1)
possibilities (1)
prepare (1)

prepared (2)
PRESENT (1)
pretty (1)
prevents (1)
previously (2)
price (1)
Print (1)
prior (1)
Probably (2)
problem (2)
problematic (1)
problems (2)
process (6)
prone (1)
proper (1)
Public (1)
pull (1)
purpose (1)
put (5)

< Q >

quality (1)
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questions (8)
quit (1)
quite (1)
quits (3)

< R >

RACHAEL (3)
raise (1)
raised (2)
ran (3)
read (1)
reading (1)
ready (2)
really (6)
reason (4)
recall (6)
recalled (9)
recalls (6)
received (3)
receiving (1)
Recess (1)
record (7)
recorded (1)
refer (2)
referring (1)
refund (4)

related (1)
remember (18)
REMOTE (1)
remove (1)
removed (1)
repeat (1)
replaced (1)
replacing (2)
report (1)
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REPORTER (8)
represent (1)
represented (1)
request (4)
research (2)
returned (3)
rid (2)
right (53)
ringing (4)
room (2)
run (3)
Russell (3)

< S >

sale (1)
salesman (9)
salesmen (1)
SARAH (1)
save (2)
saying (3)
says (12)
SC (3)
school (5)
scrap (1)
seal (1)
search (7)
searching (1)
second (9)
see (24)
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seen (1)
SEIBELS (1)
sell (4)
selling (4)
sells (2)
send (5)
sending (1)
sends (1)
sent (10)

September (1)	telling (1)	VIDEOCONFEREN
shelf (1)	ten (4)	CE (1)
ship (1)	testified (1)	vs (1)
shipped (2)	testify (1)	< W >
shop (5)	testimony (2)	wait (1)
show (1)	Thank (3)	waiting (1)
shows (2)	Thanks (1)	waived (1)
sign (1)	thereof (1)	want (10)
signature (2)	thing (1)	wanted (7)
significance (1)	things (3)	warehouse (1)
sir (53)	think (19)	warps (1)
situation (1)	Third (1)	warranty (2)
sold (11)	THOMAS (1)	wash (2)
somebody (4)	Three (2)	way (6)
sorry (5)	ticket (3)	Well (18)
sort (1)	TIME (27)	went (5)
SOUTH (8)	times (2)	we're (4)
speak (1)	TIMMY (5)	We've (1)
speaking (1)	Timmy's (2)	within-entitled (1)
specific (1)	TISDALE (38)	WITNESS (15)
spoke (1)	today (1)	word (4)
standby (2)	told (11)	words (2)
start (1)	Tom (2)	work (7)
started (1)	top (1)	worked (2)
STATE (3)	town (2)	working (2)
stated (1)	transaction (2)	would've (4)
stock (1)	transactions (1)	wrong (6)
Street (2)	transcribed (1)	WWW.CLARK-
strike (1)	transcription (1)	ASSOCIATES.COM
structure (1)	truck (2)	(1)
stuff (2)	true (1)	< Y >
subject (3)	truth (4)	YATES (1)
subscribe (1)	try (5)	Yeah (16)
Suite (1)	trying (6)	year (5)
Supposedly (1)	turn (1)	years (2)
sure (8)	Two (3)	< Z >
swear (1)	< U >	ZOE'LIA (1)
sworn (2)	unable (1)	
system (1)	unclear (1)	
< T >	understand (19)	
tabs (8)	understanding (1)	
take (11)	upset (2)	
taken (3)	use (5)	
talked (2)	usually (1)	
talking (3)	< V >	
Technical (2)	valves (2)	
telephone (2)	VARNADO (20)	
tell (10)	VERBATIM (3)	



Kia Motors America, Inc.
Corporate Headquarters
111 Peters Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92606-1790 USA

EXHIBIT C

25003



IMPORTANT SAFETY RECALL

(Interim Notice)

(NHTSA Recall Number: 20V-100)

This notice applies to your vehicle: (5XXGN4A72DG188737)

April 13, 2020

Dear Kia Optima Owner:

Kia has identified a defect in your vehicle which relates to motor vehicle safety

This notice is sent to you in accordance with the requirements of the National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act. Kia Motors has decided that a defect which relates to motor vehicle safety exists in certain 2013-2014 MY Kia Optima vehicles equipped with the 2.4-liter Gasoline Direct Injection (GDI) and 2.0-liter GDI Turbo engines. The defect can result in a fire in your vehicle's engine compartment, thus increasing the risk of injury. Our records indicate that you own or lease one of the potentially affected vehicles.

This is only an interim letter as we evaluate a remedy. The purpose of this letter is to keep you informed of Kia's recall implementation plan. We will send you another letter when the remedy is available, and the repair will be performed at no cost to you. HOWEVER, PLEASE SEE THE "WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IN THE INTERIM" SECTION BELOW.

What Is The Problem?



The material of the low pressure fuel tube may deteriorate over time and develop a crack from exposure to heat generated within the engine compartment under certain circumstances. If the fuel tube develops a crack, a fuel smell and eventually a fuel leak can occur. Leaking fuel increases the risk of fire, thereby increasing the risk of injury.

What Should You Do In The Interim?

- If fuel smell is detected, please contact the closest authorized Kia dealership to have your vehicle towed to the dealer.
- To find your nearest dealer, visit www.kia.com and click the "Find Dealer" button in the upper right corner ("Dealers" on a mobile device). You can also use the QR code below with your mobile device to access this information (see the bottom of this letter for more information about QR code use):



What If You Have Already Paid To Have This Situation Corrected?

If you have incurred expense to remedy this issue prior to the date of this notice, you may have the opportunity to obtain reimbursement for that expense. You may submit your receipts online to Kia

via the Owners section of www.kia.com or mail your receipts with a copy of the attached Request for Reimbursement form directly to Kia for review and consideration:

**Consumer Assistance Center
Kia Motors America, Inc.
P.O. Box 52410
Irvine, CA 92619-2410
1-800-333-4542**

Pursuant to the General Reimbursement Plan issued by Kia pursuant to Federal Regulation 49 CFR 573.13, Kia will use its best efforts to respond to your claim within sixty (60) days of receipt and at that time Kia may either accept or reject that claim or it may request more information to evaluate the claim.

Have You Changed Your Address Or Sold Your Kia?

If you have changed your home address, sold your Kia vehicle, or no longer own your vehicle, please complete the attached prepaid "Change of Address/Ownership" card and mail it to us. You can also contact the Consumer Assistance Center phone number listed above.

What If You Are A Vehicle Lessor?

Federal regulation requires that any vehicle lessor receiving this recall notice must forward a copy of this notice to the lessee within ten days.

What If You Have Other Questions?

If your dealer does not respond to your service request in a timely manner, we suggest that you call Kia's Consumer Assistance Center at 1-800-333-4542. This number has TTY capability. If you still are not satisfied that we have remedied this situation without charge and within a reasonable amount of time, you may submit a complaint to the Administrator, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E., Washington, DC 20590; or call the toll free Vehicle Safety Hotline at 1-888-327-4236 (TTY: 1-800-424-9153); or go to <http://www.safercar.gov>.

This action has been taken in the interest of your safety, and we regret any inconvenience this situation may cause you.

Sincerely,

Consumer Affairs Department

QR Code Use:

- A QR Code is a square, 2-dimensional barcode that can be read by mobile devices loaded with an appropriate barcode or **QR Code Reader App**. The app reads the barcode image and then launches/uploads the specific information the code contains, such as URLs, text, photos, videos.
- With a mobile device, **download a QR Code Reader App**. With many devices, you can do this through an app store or marketplace.
- **Open the QR Code Reader App on your mobile device. The app will utilize your device's camera.** Center the code in the camera viewing area. With some apps, the URL or other information will automatically load when the code is recognized. For others, you may have to snap or take a picture of the QR code. **Refer to the QR Reader Code App instructions.**

Kia issues new recall for engine fire risk in Optima, Sorento models

Actions

EXHIBIT D

Posted at 7:40 PM, Sep 03, 2020

and last updated 12:13 PM, Sep 05, 2020

Kia announced another recall Thursday for an engine fire risk that affects hundreds of thousands of vehicles.

For more than two years, the I-Team has exposed dangerous defects causing fires in Kia and Hyundai vehicles, which have led to more than a million recalled vehicles nationwide.

The latest Kia recall includes more than 440,000 Optima and Sorento models, which the automaker reports are at risk of engine fires.

RECOMMENDED:

- [Hyundai, Kia recall more than 591K vehicles for brake fluid leak that can cause fires](#)
- [Man dies from his injuries after rented Kia Soul caught fire](#)
- [UP IN FLAMES | The latest on the Kia/Hyundai fires investigation](#)

In a recall notice to federal regulators, Kia reported the cars could experience brake fluid leaks, which could lead to an electrical short in the hydraulic electronic control unit and an engine fire.

The recalled models include the 2013 to 2015 Kia Optima and the 2014 to 2015 Kia Sorento. Also covered are 151,000 Hyundai Santa Fe SUVs from 2013 to 2015.



SUMMIT ENGINEERING, L.L.P.
P.O. BOX 211426
COLUMBIA, SC 29221-6426

TEL (803) 731-1200
FAX (803) 731-1202

January 25, 2021

EXHIBIT E

Ms. Christie C. Varnado
The Seibels Law Firm, P.A.
38 Broad Street, Suite 200
Charleston, South Carolina 29401

Reference: Hamilton and Culbreath vs. 301 Auto Parts, LLC
C/A No.: 2019-CP-10-06567
Summit File Number: DV268

Dear Ms. Varnado:

In follow-up to your request, Summit Engineering, L.L.P. has conducted an engineering investigation of a vehicle fire involving a 2013 Kia Optima owned by Mr. Hamilton and Ms. Culbreath. Mr. Hamilton purchased a replacement engine from 301 Auto Parts, LLC and had it installed by a mechanic in North Charleston during the summer of 2019. While the vehicle was being driven on September 10, 2019 in Greenwood, South Carolina, it is understood that the vehicle stopped running then a fire erupted in the engine compartment. The purpose of this investigation has been to conduct an engineering investigation of the fire with the 2013 Kia Optima vehicle.

The opinions and conclusions stated herein are stated to a reasonable degree of engineering certainty and are based on information available as of this writing. It is conceivable that additional information may be forthcoming which bears on these conclusions and opinions. The right is reserved, therefore, to review all conclusions and opinions at any future point in time should, in fact, additional information becomes available.

The following are observations made during this investigation.

1). The VIN (5XXGN4A72DG188737) shows there are three open recalls for this vehicle. There was a recall announced on February 21, 2020 NHTSA Campaign 20V100000 which included 2013 Kia Optima's with the 2.4L gas engine for "If the fuel hose cracks, a fuel leak can occur, increasing the risk of a fire...The low pressure fuel hose may deteriorate and crack over time due to heat generated within the engine compartment." Another recall dated December 9, 2018 states "...vehicles that had their engine replaced under previous recall 17V224. The defect may cause fuel to leak increasing the risk of fire...17V224 may not have been properly performed. In some cases, the high pressure fuel pipe may have been damaged, misaligned or improperly torqued during the engine replacement procedure, allowing fuel to leak, thereby increasing the risk of fire..." Both these recalls deal with engine compartment fires due to fuel delivery systems to the engine that may leak fuel due to damage to the fuel line when an engine was replaced or long term deterioration of fuel lines.

2). Records from Quality Greenwood show the engine sub-assembly was replaced under warranty in November 2017. On November 29, 2018, the vehicle was towed into Quality Greenwood due to oil leaks and engine would not start. Quality Greenwood found "oil drain plug missing in vehicle. Also found one under shield missing and the other cracked and broken. Upon further inspection we found lower radiator support bent and front bumper scratched..." The last service entry indicates the vehicle was driven over an object and damaged the underside components of the 2013 Kia Optima.

3). 301 Auto Parts sold Mr. Hamilton a replacement engine in June 2019, six months after the engine was found to be inoperable in November 2018. I have not seen any service records between November 2018 and June 2019 when someone replaced the old engine with a replacement engine purchased from 301 Auto Parts. The first engine from 301 Auto Parts installed in the subject Kia Optima did not operate for some unknown reason. A second engine from 301 Auto Parts (shipped July 15, 2019) was provided and installed in the subject 2013 Kia Optima. The vehicle reportedly was operated for about a month before the engine stopped and a fire erupted in the engine compartment.

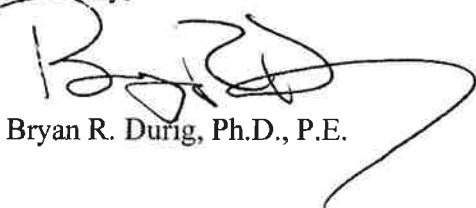
4). The fire damaged 2013 Kia Optima was examined in Greenwood, South Carolina on November 24, 2020. The fire damage was primarily contained to the engine compartment. The engine compartment was visually examined. It was noted that there were parts missing and evidence other parts had been removed prior to my inspection (the ignition coils had been removed and laying on top of the engine). Other components were found on the ground in front of the vehicle and in the rear of the vehicle. The fire damage shows most of the fire damage was high on the engine. The radiator at the front of the engine compartment was not significantly damaged. The description that the vehicle stopped operating and smoke was observed coming out of the engine compartment may be consistent with a fuel leak in the engine compartment.

5). The fire damage indicates the fire originated in the engine compartment. However, the exact cause of the fire could not be determined. There are known defects with the fuel system for this model 2013 Kia Optima (multiple recalls by Kia). The fuel system could have been damaged during one of the engine replacement operations (one by Quality Greenwood and two by someone in Charleston) or the low pressure fuel line failure that Kia had a recall after this fire due to failures resulting from long term deterioration.

6). There has been nothing reviewed to date to show the engine compartment fire was caused by the engines sold by 301 Auto Parts, LLC to Mr. Hamilton in June/July 2019.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call.

Sincerely,



Bryan R. Durg, Ph.D., P.E.