

Ford Motor Company

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OFFICE OF
DEFECTS INVESTIGATION

James P. Vondale, Director
Automotive Safety Office
Environmental & Safety Engineering

By Airborne Express

April 29, 2002

Ms. Kathleen C. DeMeter, Director
Office of Defects Investigation Safety Assurance
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
400 Seventh Street, S.W., Room No. 5326
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Ms. DeMeter:

Subject: SQ01-014

This letter is in response to the agency's April 2, 2002 email requesting further information concerning fires or loss of fuel after high-energy rear-biased collisions on 1992-2001 model year Ford Crown Victoria, Mercury Grand Marquis, and Lincoln Town Car vehicles.

Request No. 1

The TSB states that the work is eligible under the provisions of Bumper to Bumper Warranty coverage. Will dealers automatically perform the work on an affected vehicle if it comes into service for any reason? Does an owner have to request the fix?

Answer

As described in our April 4, 2002 email, the TSB-described modifications would be performed at the request of the vehicle owner.

Request No. 2

Ford's response dated Feb. 8 states, "... Ford has contacted law enforcement agencies directly, provided information to hundreds of agencies, and has transmitted information through law enforcement communications networks." Can you provide more specifics on these dissemination efforts? (Quantify mailings, calls, etc.)

Answer

Based upon the recollections of involved personnel, Ford has met directly with the Massachusetts State Police and the Connecticut State Police to discuss the TSB modifications, and has also discussed the TSB modifications with City of Phoenix Police personnel and at conferences of the National Association of Fleet Administrators - Law Enforcement Group (NAFA - LEG) in August of 2001. Also, subsequent to Ford's February 8, 2002 response to the agency, information concerning the TSB was presented at a conference of the Association of Law Enforcement and Emergency Vehicle Response Trainers (ALERT) in March of 2002. It is estimated that hundreds of law enforcement agencies were in attendance at these conferences. Ford has also transmitted information on the TSB through law enforcement communications



networks via the Michigan State Police onto "Law Net", which has the potential to reach approximately 18,000 law enforcement agencies in the United States. In addition, Ford's fleet hotline has received 102 contacts regarding the TSB as of April 17, 2002 and has distributed information to those law enforcement personnel in response.

These processes for communicating with police fleets have proven effective and have been used by the agency to disseminate information about proper aftermarket wiring procedures for police vehicles.

Request No. 3

The definition of the alleged defect would not include subject vehicles struck from the rear (rear meaning principle direction of force between [5 and 7 o'clock]) by an object, embankment, or non-vehicle structure. I will be needing these reports. I will send a letter if necessary.

Answer

Ford understands the agency's supplemental request to pertain only to 1992-2001 model year Ford Crown Victoria, Mercury Grand Marquis, and Lincoln Town Car vehicles, and not to 1992-2001 Ford Taurus vehicles which were included in the original Information request as comparator vehicles.

Ford has re-reviewed for responsiveness to the redefined alleged defect all owner and field reports on 1992-2001 model year Ford Crown Victoria, Mercury Grand Marquis, and Lincoln Town Car vehicles that were previously identified and reviewed in the original search described in our February 8, 2002 response. Ford has also conducted a supplemental search for lawsuits and claims on 1992-2001 model year Ford Crown Victoria, Mercury Grand Marquis, and Lincoln Town Car vehicles that might meet the criteria of the new alleged defect. Ford has not identified any additional responsive reports, lawsuits, or claims containing allegations of fire or fuel leak from the subject vehicles as a result of striking or being struck from the rear (rear meaning principle direction of force between 5 and 7 o'clock) by an object, embankment, or non-vehicle structure.

As a result of the supplemental lawsuit search, Ford obtained further information regarding a lawsuit (Ford, VIN 2FALP74W2PX113501) that had already been reviewed for responsiveness to the agency's original December 14, 2001 request. Ford did not previously provide this lawsuit, or its duplicative CQIS report, because the information available at the time of the response indicated that the incident was a lateral impact. This information was based upon a police report that describes the impact as a "broadside" collision. The newly obtained information included photographs of the struck vehicle. Based on our review of the photographs showing significant lateral displacement of the rear axle and frame rails, Ford continues to believe that this incident is primarily a lateral impact that occurred at a high closing speed, and is therefore non-responsive to your request. Nonetheless, we are providing a summary regarding this incident in Appendix A.

For purposes of responding to the agency's December 14, 2001 request and this supplemental request, Ford has reviewed information in its lawsuit and claim files at the time materials were being collected to prepare its responses. Because some of the incidents are the subject of current investigation, or ongoing or pending litigation, or are otherwise not yet resolved, it is

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possible that new information has been or will be generated that is not or was not available as each response was being prepared. In certain instances, Ford also requested its outside counsel to provide additional information on certain lawsuits to satisfy the agency's request for lawsuit and claim summary information as provided in Appendix C1 in our February 8, 2002 response and Appendix A in this response. Ford, however, did not undertake the nearly impossible task of requesting the hundreds of different law firms that it has retained since 1992 to determine if they received unverified anecdotal or other information from a plaintiff or third party that may relate to other incidents involving the alleged defect in the subject vehicles.

Ford also notes that in some instances, it has received information from opposing counsel that could be related to other incidents involving the alleged defect in the subject vehicles. We believe information concerning these incidents also likely has been provided to the agency by others. We are not including that information with this submittal because Ford has not been contacted by those involved in the accidents, has not verified the information, and because the information likely is already available to the agency through plaintiffs' counsel.

Please call me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,


James P. Vondale

Attachment

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