



July 2, 2018

Jim Hackett, President and CEO  
Ford Motor Company  
PO Box 6248  
Dearborn, MI 48126

Dear Mr. Hackett:

The Center for Auto Safety is writing to renew our request, again, that the Ford Motor Company undertake a recall of all Model Year (MY) 2011-2017 Explorers to address a potentially deadly hazard: Carbon Monoxide leaking into the vehicle's cabin.

Today's request comes nine months after Ford released a "Customer Satisfaction Program" ([CSP-17N03](#)) stating that the vehicles were "safe" and two years after the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) began investigating this issue. As you know, Ford refused to acknowledge in the CSP that there was any danger relating to exhaust fumes being regularly inhaled in the interior of these vehicles by stating the Carbon Monoxide levels do not "exceed what people are exposed to every day." Yet for "peace of mind" Ford offered a no-cost service reducing the potential for exposure for MY 2011-2017 Explorers.

Nine months later, it appears many Ford owners are far from "satisfied" or "safe." Ford owners continue to file complaints with NHTSA about inhaling exhaust fumes in their Explorers, and more concerning is that scores of consumers even *after* receiving their "peace of mind" fix, continue to experience the same symptoms as before their visit to the Ford dealership.

Despite the Ford's acknowledgement, via the CSP, that a repair is needed for these vehicles, and despite a recall being the most effective way to let consumers know there is a safety hazard that must be addressed quickly – Ford has failed to initiate one of its own volition. What is even more troubling is that NHTSA has chosen not to demand a recall, which means there has been no public accounting of the rate of customers who have taken advantage of Ford's "fix," no indication on [www.safercar.gov](http://www.safercar.gov) that such a "fix" is available for Explorer owners, and no objective measure as to whether the "fix" is effective.<sup>1</sup> Based on public complaints of scores of consumers who have received the "fix," yet continue to report inhaling exhaust fumes containing Carbon Monoxide, one can only conclude it is not.

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<sup>1</sup> Preliminary Evaluation (PE 16-008) of MY 2011-2015 Ford Explorers for "exhaust odors in the occupant compartment." was opened July 1, 2016. In July 2017, NHTSA opened Engineering Analysis (EA 17-002) adding MY 2016 and 2017 Explorers to the investigation, but no resolution has been announced.

Just a few examples of complaints *after* receiving the Ford “fix” include:

- Ford Customer in Summerville, SC, owns a 2016 Explorer. After experiencing “weird smells” and learning of news reports in July 2017, the consumer used a CO monitor in the vehicle and found elevated levels of CO. The vehicle “has been to the dealer approx. 10 time [sic] and had the TSB service performed, but the problem still exists.” The consumer has three cases open with Ford, and Ford denied a buyback request. The consumer pleads “We have had CO problems for over a year now. Please help because Ford won’t.” The complaint was submitted on April 22, 2018.
- Ford Customer in Westminster, MD, owns a 2016 Explorer. Two months after having the vehicle serviced under the CSP-17N03, symptoms of CO exposure persisted. Upon bringing the vehicle back to the service center, two additional leaks were found. Ford initially refused to cover the cost of the repair, and only after five days of hassle did Ford agree to pay 80%. (Recall repairs are, of course, free.) The complaint was submitted on April 19, 2018.
- Ford Customer in Jenison, MI, owns a 2012 Explorer. After experiencing an odor and feeling nauseous and dizzy, the consumer brought the vehicle to dealer “on three separate occasions to have the voluntary Ford exhaust campaign completed.” The consumer is still experiencing the exhaust odors and medical symptoms associated with elevated CO exposure. The complaint was submitted on April 9, 2018.
- Ford Customer in Windsor, MD, owns a 2015 Explorer. Two months after having the vehicle serviced at a Ford dealership for CO, the customer again began experiencing strong CO odors in the cabin and suffering headaches. When the customer called the dealership to schedule another repair, the dealership informed the customer that they would charge \$138 for a diagnostic evaluation. (Recall repairs are, of course, free.) The complaint was submitted on April 9, 2018.
- Ford Customer in Quincy, MA, owns a 2013 Explorer. The “vehicle was taken to [the] dealer to have the AC reprogrammed and tailgate seals inspected.” However, the consumer is still experiencing the CO odors and is having difficulty driving unless the windows are down. The complaint was submitted on March 28, 2018.
- Ford Customer in Porter, TX, owns a 2014 Explorer. After receiving a letter from Ford concerning CO in the cabin, the consumer brought the vehicle to a Ford dealership to repair the issue. The consumer states that the issue is now worse, and that the two CO detectors in the vehicle indicate unsafe levels of CO within minutes of driving. Additionally, when the consumer and his/her family ride in the vehicle they suffer headaches. The complaint was submitted on March 19, 2018.

- Ford Customer in Las Cruces, NM, owns a 2013 Explorer. The vehicle has been serviced for CO entering the cabin under Ford's CSP-17N03 on two separate occasions. Still, the consumer smells exhaust in the cabin and his/her personal CO monitor is picking up unsafe levels of CO in the vehicle. Additionally, the consumer will not place his/her one-year-old child in the car for fear of CO exposure. The complaint was submitted on January 31, 2018.

In July 2017 Ford reported to NHTSA it had received over 2000 complaints from its customers regarding this hazard, though the public does not know for how many years Ford has been receiving them. As for NHTSA, over these past two years, the federal agency has received in excess of 1500 complaints, including some on the 2018 Explorers.<sup>2</sup> Yet, there has been no new corrective action.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, excess exposure to CO is responsible for more than 400 deaths annually in the U.S. Carbon Monoxide poisoning is often referred to as a "silent killer" because, unless mixed with other gases, it is odorless. What makes the exposure so dangerous is that the symptoms (loss of consciousness, nausea, headaches, or light headedness) mimic flu-like symptoms and therefore delay accurate diagnosis of the root cause of the injury – elevated levels of CO in the victim's blood. Further, as the victim is often unaware of the immediate cause of their injury, CO exposure can be an unsuspected culprit when no expected source is recognizable, leading to underreporting of incidents. It is easy to imagine a roadside crash caused by CO exposure resulting in a serious injury or fatality being written off as "drowsy driving."

With all due respect to the efforts undertaken by Ford, and NHTSA, over these last two years, the continued complaints and their corresponding reports of incidents and injuries demonstrate the problem of Carbon Monoxide exposure inside Ford Explorers has not been resolved. We urge you, on behalf of Ford's customers, and everyone with whom they share the road, to act before tragedy strikes.

Sincerely,



Jason Levine  
Executive Director

cc: Ms. Heidi King, Deputy Administrator, NHTSA  
Mr. Steven Ridella, Director, ODI, NHTSA

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<sup>2</sup> Based on the number of complaints NHTSA has received the problem seems to continue in MY 2018 Explorers and has not been designed out of the vehicle. Does the CSP apply to these vehicles as well?