

U.S. Department
of TransportationNational Highway
Traffic Safety
Administration

DOT Auto Safety Hotline Vehicle Owner's Questionnaire TO REPORT VEHICLE SAFETY DEFECTS

1-888-DASH-2-DOT
(1-888-327-4238)
INTERNET: www.nhtsa.dot.gov/hotline

FOR AGENCY USE ONLY

Date Received

RECEIVED

FEB 19 2003

OFFICE

DEFECTS INVESTIGATION

Ocl. or

r_drt

od_r

up_tr

Reference No.

10008655

OWNER INFORMATION (Type or Print)

Name

Street No.

Apt. No.

City

Novato

State

CA

Zip Code

Daytime Telephone Number

Do you authorize NHTSA to provide a copy of this report to the manufacturer of your vehicle? ☒ YES ☐ NO
In the absence of an authorization, NHTSA WILL NOT provide your name or address to the vehicle manufacturer.

Signature of Owner

Date

1/21/03

PRODUCT INFORMATION

Vehicle Identification No. (VIN)
(17 Digits)(Located at bottom of
windshield on driver's side)

Make

Ford VNU

Model

WINDSTAR

Year

1996

Purchased Date

10-6-96

Dealer's Name

Novato Ford

Engine Size

(CID/GAL)

☐ Turbo☐ Diesel☒ Gas☐ Fuel Injection☒ New ☐ Used

Dealer's City

Novato

State

CA

Zip Code

94945

No. Cylinders

6

Manufacture Date
(on driver's door or pillar)

Transmission Type

☐ Manual☒ Automatic

Restraint System

☐ Driver's Air Bag☐ Motorbelt☒ Passenger's Air Bag☐ 2-Point Belt☐ 3-Point Belt

Cruise Control

☒ Yes☐ No

Drivetrain

☐ Front☐ Rear☐ 4-Wheel

Vehicle Type

☐ Car☐ Sport Utility☒ Van☐ Truck☐ Minivan☐ Motorcycle☐ Other

Body Style

☐ 2-Door☐ 4-Door☐ Stationwagon☐ Pick Up Truck☒ Other

FAILED COMPONENT(S)/PART(S) INFORMATION

Part Name(s)

see letter

Location

☐ Left☐ Right☐ Front☐ Rear

Failed Part(s)

☐ Original☐ Replacement

Handicap Adaptive Equip

☐ Yes☐ No

TO BE COMPLETED WHEN REPORTING A TIRE FAILURE

Tire Brand

Tire Name

Complete Tire Size

No. of Failures

Date(s) of Failure(s)

Mileage at Failure(s)

Vehicle Speed at Failure(s)

Failed Part(s)
Available?☒ Yes☐ NoNHTSA Previously
Contacted?☐ Yes☐ No

APPLICABLE INCIDENT INFORMATION

(Please describe in detail the incident(s), Failure(s), Crash(es), and Injury(ies). Attach photos if available.)

Crash

☐ Yes ☐ No

Fire

☐ Yes ☐ No

Number of Persons Injured

Number of Fatalities

Reported to Manufacturer

☐ Yes ☐ No

Narrative Description of incident(s), Failure(s), Crash(es), and Injury(ies).

(see attached letter)

Continue on back.

The Privacy Act of 1974 - Public Law 93-579 This information is requested pursuant to a49 U.S.C. Chapter 301. You are under no obligation to respond to this questionnaire. Your response may be used to assist NHTSA in determining whether a manufacturer should take appropriate action to correct a safety defect. If NHTSA proceeds with administration enforcement or litigation against a manufacturer, your response, or a statistical summary thereof, may be used in support of the agency's action.

[REDACTED]
Novato, CA
[REDACTED]

January 21, 2003

U.S. Department of Transportation
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
DOT Auto Safety Hotline, NSA-10.1
400 7th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20590

Re: VIN 2FMDA5149TBC4495

I am filing a complaint against Ford Motor Company regarding the ongoing problems I have had with this 1996 Ford Van Windstar since I purchased it in October of 1996. I have been stuck on the road with this car several times and will outline the problems and potential problems I could have had. I finally had to have a new rebuilt engine put in this car recently which Ford refused to pay for and have a Complaint filed with the Bureau of Automotive Repair. Mr. Loveless is the Investigator and he recommended that I also file a complaint with you. I am attaching a copy of my letter to Paula Grimes, the Regional Manager of Ford in which I described in detail everything that has gone wrong with this car since I purchased it. I received a phone call from Amy Gotiwalla at Ford Motor saying they would not pay for anything or assume any liability for this car. I had to pay \$4669.33 for a Ford Rebuilt engine to be put in this car on 11-22-02. Mr Loveless is currently investigating my case to see if Ford should be held liable and pay for this cost I have incurred, especially since I have had nothing but problems with this vehicle since purchase.

I am also attaching copies of all service done on this vehicle since purchase.

There are several safety issues I'd like to bring to your attention: Firstly, the anti-brake service light came on and would flash periodically right after purchase of the vehicle. Novato Ford said they checked the fluids at the 4565 mile check and it was fine. At 10,335 miles, I was told the brake fluid was low and fluid was added, while in Medford Oregon. The ABS light again continued to flash on and off. At 23,510 miles, Novato Ford was notified about the ABS lite and again said all fluids were fine. They did an oil and filter change and replaced and reprogrammed the 02 sensors thinking this might be the problem with the light. It still came on and off after that. At 24,449, my husband and I were driving on the freeway with our 2 children and the car was jolting and we thought it was going to die. We managed to glide into Novato Ford on a Sunday evening and it died as we hit the parking lot. As it turned out, the transmission burned itself out internally and Novato Ford replaced it because it was still under warranty. We asked for the reason of this happening and Novato Ford never provided an answer. We could have been in an accident and all 4 of us hurt had the car died on the freeway.

The ABS light continued to flash and at 28,626, Novato Ford told us the brake fluid was low and they added fluid. At 28,818 we replaced the front brakes at Kindt Automotive and from then on I had my oil and filter changed every 3000-4000 miles, replaced at Pennzoil. At 41,622 the ABS

lite came on and would not go off. The cars warranty expired at 36,000 miles. We brought the car to Kindt Automotive who was familiar with the car and he pulled up a technical bulletin issued on 3/18/98, giving instructions on how to reprogram the ABS lite switch. Mr. Kindt was unsuccessful at reprogramming this control and even called Ford Motor who said I might need a to replace the Master Cylinder which cost about \$500.00. He suggested at this point to just unplug the ABS light and instructed me to periodically check the brake fluid which I have been doing and have had no trouble with. I was told if the ABS control had malfunctioned while driving the car, I could have lost control of the brakes and been killed. My car should have been covered under the lemon law because the ABS light was malfunctioning from the date of purchase and Ford Motor certainly saw the vehicle for this problem more than 3 times during the first 18 months of ownership. They said this was not the case but the lemon law states if you have had your car serviced for the same problem during the first 18 months of ownership and the dealership cannot find the problem, you are entitled to a new car.

Then the most recent problem is the contaminate of the engine with coolant. Kindt automotive did a 60,000 mile tune-up and even flushed the coolant at this tune up and didn't notice any leakage into the engine. He again researched the problem that Ford again had sent out a technical bulletin in June 1999. During this time of the bulletin, I only had 33,466 miles on my car so it technically was still under warranty. They stated in the bulletin that it was a difficult problem to diagnose. My mechanic didn't even notice a leak during a major 60,000 mile tune up 1 month before. If I hadn't noticed this problem, my engine would have died again and I could have been stranded.

So, I had to replace the engine with a new one. This was the only way to reassure that I would be safe while driving this car. As you can see, Ford never has helped me with any of the problems. They issue these technical bulletins to mechanics but don't notify the actual owners of the cars. Now how fair is this?

Although we suffered no physical harm to ourselves while driving this car, there certainly was potential for serious life threatening harm had the car died on the freeway had the ABS lite and brakes gone out, had the transmission died on the freeway, or had the engine died with the contaminated coolant. We were fortunate to not have suffered any life threatening problems but it could have happened.

We would like you to investigate the problems with this automobile and Ford Winstars, made in 1996. I know of two other people that have had nothing but trouble with their vehicles of the same year and have all had the same exact problems that I had and Ford paid for their engines to be replaced. I would like them to reimburse me for the cost of this rebuilt engine and take on this liability. Only when they start being forced to be accountable for their mistakes, then will they start taking better care of their vehicles and of their clients to prevent accidents from occurring. This letter will serve as my complaint against Ford motor and you may contact me at the above address and phone number should you have any further questions.

Thank you,

