U.S. Department of Transportation
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

DOT Auto Safety Hotline

Vehicle Owner's Questionnaire

To Report Vehicle Safety Defects
1-888-DASH-2-DOT
(1-888-327-4236)
INTERNET www.nhtsa.dot.gov/hotline

FOR AGENCY USE ONLY 1367

Date Received	Repository ☐
2003 SEP 15 PM 1:45 15-AUG-2003	Reference No. 10034041

OWNER INFORMATION (Type or Print)

Name	[redacted]
Address	[redacted]
City: SACRAMENTO	State: CA
Zip Code: [redacted]	
Daytime Telephone Number: [redacted]	E-mail Address:
Evening 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 __/__/__

VEHICLE INFORMATION

17 digit Vehicle Identification Number Located at bottom of windshield on driver's side	Make	Model	Model Year
5LMPU28A7YL105875	LINCOLN	NAVIGATOR	2000

Date Purchased	Dealer's Name and Telephone Number	Engine: No. Cylinders	Fuel Type:
JULY 26, 02	WINTER LINCOLN (916) 421-3401	8	GASOLINE

Original Owner	Dealer's City	State	Zip Code
☐			

Transmission Type		Powertrain	Vehicle Component Code
AUTO	☒ Antilock Brakes ☒ Cruise Control	4X	203000 WHEELS:LUGS/NUTS/BOLTS Multiple Failure: 1

FAILED COMPONENT(S)/PART(S) INFORMATION

Incident Date(s)	Failure Mileage	Failure Speed
JULY 21 03	44569	60

ADDITIONAL ITEMS TO BE COMPLETED WHEN REPORTING A TIRE FAILURE

Tire Make	Tire Model (Name or Number)	Tire Size (Example P215/65R15)
DOT No. (Example: DOTMA19ABC036)	☐ Original Equipment ☐ Prior Repair	Failure Location:
Tire Component Code		Tire Failure Type

ADDITIONAL ITEMS TO BE COMPLETED WHEN REPORTING A CHILD SEAT FAILURE

Make:	Date Manufactured:	Model No./Name:
Seat Type:	Installation System:	
Child Seat Component Code:	Failed Part:	

APPLICABLE INCIDENT INFORMATION
(Please describe in detail the incident(s), Failure(s), Crash(es), and Injury(ies).)

Crash	Fire	Number of Persons Injured	Number of Deaths	Reported to Police
☐ Yes ☒ No	☐ Yes ☒ No	0	0	N

Narrative Description of Incident(s), Crash(es), and Injury(ies).
Please describe (1) events leading up to the failure, (2) failure and its consequences, and (3) what was done to correct the failure; i.e., parts repaired or replaced (and if old part is available).

REAR RIGHT WHEEL FELL OFF WHILE DRIVING AT AN UNDETERMINED SPEED. THIS WAS CAUSED BY THE LUG SEPARATING FROM THE NUT BECAUSE IT NOT BEING LONG ENOUGH AT TIME OF BEING MAUFACTURED.*AK

REFER TO ATTACHED

Include, if available: Police/Fire Department Report, Photos, and Repair Invoice. ATTACH ADDITIONAL SHEETS IF NECESSARY

August 26 2003

The following report will be a chronological account of the incident and problems that arose in regards too the lug failure and wheel loss my family and I experienced on July 21, 2003.

As the Ford Motor Company, the DOT National Traffic Safety Administration, the California Bureau of Automotive Repair, the California Insurance Commission and Call 3 all have asked for information, I intend to provide a full account as accurately as possible.

On July 21st a Monday, at approx. 1645hrs. I was driving my 2000 Lincoln Navigator to the Sacramento Airport. Passengers in the vehicle were, my wife [redacted] in the right front. In the seat behind her my son in law [redacted] sat on the right. My grand daughter [redacted] months old was in the left. My grandson [redacted] was in the rear a most seat. All in the vehicle were properly seat belted in. Both children in proper child restraint devices.

Commuter traffic was very heavy and the congestion compounded by a fire on I-5 made the traffic stop and go. I felt a vibration in the wheel that seemed like a low tire. Unable to get to the shoulder, I continued by the fire and accelerated to change to the shoulder. At this point, I felt the right rear of the vehicle drop as I observed the tire and wheel pass me by on the right. The tire continued into the median. I steered my vehicle to the shoulder and rolled to a stop.

Checking, we found that none was injured. Alternate transportation was arranged for my family. I remained with the car until a tow truck arrived. No police report was completed, as there had been no other vehicles involved and no injuries incurred.

As no Lincoln dealership exists in North Sacramento, the vehicle was taken to Suburban Ford, at Date and Madison.

Our insurance carrier Mercury Insurance Group was advised. An adjuster, Melanie Brink, went to Suburban ford and after looking over the Navigator, filed a report that indicated that the lug nuts on the vehicle appeared to be illegal as no threads on the stud came through the nut. I was advised by the insurance carrier that this appeared to be a warranty issue and that I would have to proceed on my own as they could not help me.

I went to the Suburban Ford and looked at the studs on the left, undamaged, rear wheel. I could see that the studs were, infact, short. The approx. ¼ inch tit on the end on the stud was recessed in the lug nut. This allowed for only about ½ of the nut to retain purchase on the lug. Advised by the ford dealership that I would have to take it up with Winter Lincoln, where I had purchased the car, I drove to their location in South Sacramento. I contacted Robert Cairel, Assistant Used Car Manager. At the onset, Mr. Cairel felt this claim had merit. Then perhaps not as he disappeared a number of times into the administrative offices and returned. Ultimately, after a couple of hours, I was dismissed with a "we'll look onto it further." The following day, I was contacted by Mr. Caifel who informed me that his superior, Service Manager Jim Eaton, had gone to Suburban Ford and looked at my vehicle and come to the conclusion that it was not a warranty issue as he had looked at a number of Navigators on the Winters lot and found some lugs as short as those on mine.

I contacted the Mercury insurance group and asked to speak with the manager. I was advised he was not available. I asked to talk with some one higher than the adjuster Ms. Brink. I spoke with Steve who advised he was her supervisor. I explained that the Lincoln people refused to accept the claim and asked that they assist me in further investigation. He refused, again stating that I must handle it myself, as it wasn't an insurance issue. I asked that he contact the dealership and begin the process of repair on my vehicle, as the outcome would be either a warranty problem or an insurance claim in the end. I tried to explain that it was my understanding that the function of an insurance company was to put me back on the road, that final litigation could determine who paid. He steadfastly maintained that it was not an insurance issue that I would have to handle it myself. I asked that he at least send me the photos they had taken of the Navigator. He agreed to do so.

My wife contacted the Insurance Commissioners office and was "blown off" by representative Alan, who without listening to the full story, told her it, was a warranty issue.

I contacted Call 3. Patricia determined my problem had merit and started a file. She advised they would look into it.

I was unable to contact the Ford Motor Company due to an East Coast power failure.

In the mean time, I went to the two dealerships and took photos of the lugs of my vehicle and the one Jim Eaton of Winters deemed to have short studs as well. While he declared that those on his vehicle were as short as mine, they were obviously longer than mine.

I contacted the Ford Motor Company on the 19th and was advised by a very polite young man, after some delay while he contacted the Winter's people, that the final decision rests with the Winters Dealership.

I called the Insurance Commissioners office myself. Mary, who took my call, listened to my story. I asked if, regardless of the reason the wheel came off, it would not be a collision when the body of the vehicle struck the ground? She agreed and promised to send me a complaint form.

Realizing that my camera film had failed, I set out to again photograph the short studs on my car and that Mr. Eaton had shown me on the Winters Lot. Mr. Eaton was kind enough to retrace his steps with me.

The following morning, Mr. Eaton called me at home and advised he had done some research after I left. He advised that he had found a service order that documented a stud change from 12mm to 14mm approx. two months after my vehicle had been manufactured. My wife and I went on the Internet and were able to find that change, Bulletin Num. 13576 Dated Nov. 01, 1999.

Armed with this information, I again contacted the Ford Motor Company and talked with a Mr. Stedman. After speaking with the Suburban Ford Service Manager, Mr. Smith, Mr. Stedman advised they would reevaluate the situation. An engineer would check the vehicle.

As a week had gone by with no pictures arriving from the Mercury people, my wife contacted Ms. Brink. While asking about the pictures, she informed Ms. Brink of the lug change and of our contact with the Insurance Commissioner's office. A few hours later Ms. Brink recalled my wife to advise that her supervisor had been researching the situation since talking with me and the while it was a "fine line", they were going to send a check for the full amount of the repair to Suburban Ford and that I would not be charged with an accident on their records.

While the fight over insurance/warranty is now passed to Ford Motor Company and Mercury Insurance, I am completing these complaint forms for the following

First, The unreasonable divorcing of itself from the process by Mercury Insurance Group caused extended delay to the repair of my vehicle and extreme stress to my wife and I. A less experienced investigator might well have given up and been forced to suffer a large out of pocket expense to cover the costs of the investigation and repair. It prompts one to ask what we pay insurance for?

Second, The Ford Motor Company, in a cost saving attempt, Failed to recall the 2000 Navigators following their engineering discovery of a substandard wheel stud and subsequent design change to increase the size of the stud. They apparently just crossed their fingers that no catastrophic failure would occur. Unfortunately, that catastrophic event did happen, to me. I only thank God that it was a rear and not a front wheel that failed and that I, a retired CHP traffic officer, was driving and not someone inexperienced in emergency driving.

Though the Ford Motor Company still refuses to credit this incident to their short sightedness, their engineer sent to Suburban shrugged it off as loose nuts, per Service Manager Mr. Smith, I ask that a full investigation be instituted and a recall be considered to preclude further life threatening incidents such as that which occurred to my family.

[redacted]