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 100192

Date Received: 08-JUL-2004

Repository ☐

Reference No. 10081640

OWNER INFORMATION (Type or Print)

Name [redacted]

Address [redacted]

City: HADDON TOWNSHIP | State: NJ | Zip Code [redacted]

Daytime Telephone Number [redacted]

Evening Telephone Number [redacted]

E-mail Address

Do you authorize NHTSA to provide a copy of this report to the manufacturer of your vehicle? ☑ YES ☒ NO
In the absence of an [redacted] *your name or address to the vehicle manufacturer.*

Signature of Owner [redacted] Date 07/27/04

VEHICLE INFORMATION

17 digit Vehicle Identification Number Located at bottom of windshield on driver's side	Make	Model	Model Year
2MELM74WCVX [redacted]	MERCURY	GRAND MARQUIS	1997

Date Purchased	Dealer's Name and Telephone Number	Engine: No. Cylinders	Fuel Type:
07/27/1997	Holman Lincoln Mercury 8561234700	V8	Gas

Original Owner	Dealer's City	State	Zip Code
☒ NO	MAPLE SHADE	NJ	08052

Transmission Type		Powertrain	Vehicle Component Code
AUTOMATIC	☒ Antilock Brakes ☒ Cruise Control	REAR WHEEL DRIVE	063200 ENGINE AND ENGINE COOLING:EXHAUST SYSTEM:MANIFOLI Multiple Failure: 1

FAILED COMPONENT(S)/PART(S) INFORMATION

Incident Date(s)	Failure Mileage	Failure Speed	
08-JUL-2004	88000	45 MPH	Intake manifold

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: DOTMALBABC038)	☐ 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	None.	None.	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).

CONSUMER PULLED OVER TO THE SIDE OF THE ROAD AND THERE WAS FLUID ALL OVER THE ENGINE BECAUSE THE INTAKE MANIFOLD MADE OF PLASTIC CRACKED. CONSUMER CONTACTED LINCOLN MERCURY, AND WAS TOLD THAT THIS WAS THE DESIGNED FEATURES OF THE VEHICLE, AND THERE WAS NOTHING THEY COULD DO. *AK

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

U S Department of Transportation
National Highway
Traffic Safety
Administration

July 28, 2004
[redacted]
Haddon Township, NJ [redacted]

Subject: Narrative Description of Incident Failure (Intake Manifold)
Vehicle: 1997 Mercury Grand Marquis
VIN. No.

My son was driving my wife's car and she was a passenger. They were traveling from our home in New Jersey to Langhorne, Pennsylvania. They passed through Philadelphia on I 95 and were just entering the Yardley exit when my son said the engine seemed to miss and suddenly there was a large cloud of white smoke and fluid spraying out of the hood. He immediately pulled into a parking lot and shut off the engine, when he got out of the vehicle he saw anti freeze leaking out from under the front end of the car and when he raised the hood he found anti freeze puddle in every crevice on the top of the engine and dripping from the thoroughly soaked under hood insulation mat.

When my son called and told me what had happened, I assumed that a radiator hose had burst or that the thermostat had failed and said that I would drive up and fix it in order to save time. (He had to leave for California the next morning and had a lot to do before then). When I got there we removed the top radiator hose and the thermostat and found both to be in perfect condition which I thought left the lower radiator hose or the water pump as the cause of the failure. Since I could not reach these components we called a garage with Certified Mechanics and had the car towed there.
When the mechanic called to advise the nature of the problem and the cost to do the repairs I was shocked to learn that the intake manifold had burst and that it would cost over $900.00 to replace. I was even more shocked to learn that the reason for the manifold bursting was that it was made of molded plastic and that according to the mechanic he had replaced manifolds on at least 5 1997 or newer Mercury Grand Marquis all of which had failed in the same manner, suddenly and with no warning.
I authorized the mechanic to do the necessary repairs and we returned to New Jersey.

The next day I contacted a family friend who is a Certified Mechanic and asked him about the plastic manifolds. He said that "this was a very common problem and that he had replaced 5 or 6 manifolds and that I should report it to the DOT because this was a potentially dangerous problem". He went on to ask if the manifold had split or exploded? According to the mechanic in a number of instances the manifold has exploded while the engine was running and being worked on sometimes spraying the mechanic with scalding hot fluid.
The explosion is caused by a condition he referred to as "hot soak" a condition where fuel vapors collect in the manifold and if the engine miss fires it causes an explosion in the intake manifold which due to its plastic construction is not capable of containing the explosion and instead "explodes" spraying the coolant every where.
He also said that "there was a similar problem with one model Pontiac that also had a plastic manifold".

I also contacted the Lincoln Mercury Regional Customer Service Office (800/521-4140) and explained my problem to a very professional and courteous woman who after having me on hold for several minutes while she searched their service advisories for information on defective manifolds. She advised that there were no Recall Advisories regarding intake manifolds and that there was no special warranty to cover the manifold. She also strongly advised that I have the vehicle repaired by an Authorized Lincoln Mercury Agency "because they would be familiar with the vehicle and would know of any changes or modifications that may have been made to the replacement manifolds".

Today (07/27/04) I had the oil changed on the subject vehicle and asked the mechanic about the manifolds. He was very familiar with the problem and said that "he had replaced at least 12 manifolds including several on the Township's (Audubon, NJ) Ford police cars". He also said that "the dealers claim not to know about any problem with the manifolds but the district parts center always has at least 12 manifolds in stock"*. He also said that "most of the failures that he has repaired were due to the manifold warping and leaking"**. He said that "he had herd of the manifolds exploding but had never had the problem or knew anyone that had experienced this type of failure".

*The mechanic who replaced the manifold on my wife's car also told me "that every replacement manifold he has installed was different from the previous one which he feels is because Ford is still trying to resolve the problem with continuous modifications". He added that "the replacement unit for my wife's car was very different from the one that had failed, and that the new one had metal reinforcing and the Thermostat Housing was totally different".***

He also said that "because of the continuous re-design of the manifolds there were no "After Market" units available even though this problem had been on going since the 1997 models were released".

** On their Web Site ALLDATA lists a Ford Service Bulletin, TBS Number 02-2-2, Date Feb. 02, TBS Title: Intake Manifold – cross-over Channel Coolant Seeps

*** I have the failed unit if you want it.

Conclusions:

Extent of the problem:

There appears to be an ongoing problem with the design and / or manufacture of this unit and if three small independent service facilities located within 30 miles of my home have replaced a total of approximately 22 manifolds and the regional parts center keeps at least 12 units in stock it seems logical that nationwide there have been hundreds possibly thousands of intake manifold failures, particularly if you take into consideration the fact that this engine and manifold combination are the standard unit for all V8 powered Ford vehicles.

Cost:

The cost to consumers is significant in my case $638.00 for the manifold and $300.00 for labor. Obviously there are other costs including convience and possibly the need to rent a car while theirs is being repaired.

Safety Concerns:

There appears to be two modes of failure that occur with this unit;

1. The manifold warps over a period of time and coolant seepage occurs and results in some convience and expense to the owner of the vehicle.

2. A catrostraphic failure of the unit which results in an immediate loss of all coolant;

Depending on the circumstances this could result in the mechanic or vehicle owner suffering serious burns.

In my son and wife's case it could have resulted in a serious accident had the manifold failed a few minutes earlier. I95 is a very heavily traveled 3 lane highway and the traffic flows at a high rate of speed (65 MPH and usually higher).
Had my son experienced the manifold failure in that heavy traffic and at that speed the sudden loss of all coolant could have caused him to loose control of the vehicle or the engine could have "seized" resulting in the loss of the power steering and possibly causing the vehicle to a sudden stop with no warning.
This situation would have most likely resulted in a multiple vehicle accident possibly resulting in serious injuries or fatalities.

I believe that it is important that Ford be required to address this problem immediately and if it is as common and potentially serious as it appears to be they should be required to do what ever is necessary to provide consumers with a "germinate fix". They should also be required to provide some financial compensation to every vehicle owner who has experienced this problem.

If you have any questions or if I can be of further assistance I can be reached at:

[redacted] (residence)
(work)
(Fax)
[redacted]

1. The Mercury is owned by my wife, [redacted]. She purchased it from Holman Lincoln Mercury in July of 2000. It was a Certified Used Car (coming off a FMC Lease) with an extended warranty 3 years/36,000 miles
2. You may also want to check; http://www.tgrigsby.com/views/jerami.htm for the experience of another 1997 Mercury Grand Marquis owner and his experience with Ford Motor Company's Customer Relationship Center.
3. Holman Lincoln Mercury
   571 West Route 38
   Maple Shade, NJ 08052
   Tel. 856/234-4900

THE ATTACHMENTS TO THIS DOCUMENT HAVE BEEN REMOVED TO PROTECT UNWARRANTED INVASION OF PERSONAL PRIVACY PURSUANT TO EXEMPTION 6 OF THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. 552(b)(6).