



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

400 Seventh Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590

SEP 9 2005

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Middlebury, CT [REDACTED]

NVS-216 mjj
Ref. No. 10108724

Dear [REDACTED]:

Thank you for your correspondence dated July 18, 2005, requesting reimbursement from Ford Motor Company (Ford) for expenses you incurred to repair the front suspension system in your model year (MY) 1998 Ford Contour vehicle. Your correspondence was received on August 3, 2005. Due to limited resources we were not able to respond to you in a more timely manner. We regret any inconvenience our delay may have caused you.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) is the Federal agency responsible for improving safety on our Nation's highways. We are authorized to order manufacturers to recall and repair vehicles or items of motor vehicle equipment when our investigations indicate that they contain serious safety defects in their design, construction, or performance. We also monitor the adequacy of manufacturers' recall campaigns. In order for the agency to initiate an investigation, we look carefully at the body of consumer complaints and other available data to determine whether a defect may exist. We cannot act on isolated problems or resolve disputes between individual owners, dealers, or manufacturers.

We appreciate this correspondence; your previous correspondence dated May 5, 2005; the report you filed with the U.S. Department of Transportation's Vehicle Safety Hotline (Hotline) on January 24, 2005; and the additional information you provided to supplement that report, which was received by the agency on February 16, 2005. Reports from motorists are a very important source of information for us. Each report is analyzed and entered into a database to help us determine whether an investigation into a possible safety defect or recall inadequacy is warranted.

Information submitted by vehicle owners using Vehicle Owner's Questionnaires (VOQs) is automatically entered into our complaint database, and data is then available to NHTSA's Office of Defects Investigation investigators for review and analysis to determine whether an investigation is warranted. Due to the volume of VOQs received and limited agency resources, NHTSA cannot respond to the submitters of these questionnaires. We apologize for any confusion this may have caused you.



DOT AUTO SAFETY HOTLINE
888-DASH-2-DOT
888-327-4236

We notified Ford of your request for reimbursement of expenses you incurred to repair your MY 1998 Ford Contour vehicle and requested that your request be reviewed. Ford responded to our inquiry and notified the agency that the build date for your vehicle is June 23, 1998. Consequently, the build date for your vehicle eliminates it from being subject to Ford's safety recall of the front coil springs in certain MY 1998 Ford Contour and Mercury Mystique vehicles (NHTSA Campaign No. 01V-255). Ford's safety recall does not include MY 1998 Ford Contour and Mercury Mystique vehicles that were built or manufactured after April 18, 1998. For your information, we are enclosing a copy of Ford's letter dated August 3, 2001, and a summary of NHTSA Campaign No. 01V-255.

We have reviewed our database in an effort to identify whether a safety defect or recall inadequacy trend exists with regard to problems associated with the suspension system, specifically the front coil springs, in MY 1998 Ford Contour and Mercury Mystique vehicles that were excluded from the scope of NHTSA Campaign No. 01V-255. At this time, there is insufficient evidence to warrant opening a safety defect or recall inadequacy investigation. The information you provided has been entered into our database. It will be considered with other reports to identify any safety defect trends that may require our attention.

We sympathize with you concerning your request for reimbursement; however, this does not fall under our jurisdiction since your vehicle is not subject to a safety recall. If you have not done so, you may consider contacting your local Consumer Protection Agency, Better Business Bureau, or the Connecticut State Office of the Attorney General regarding your request. You may also ask your local dealership for a meeting with Ford's district manager regarding your request.

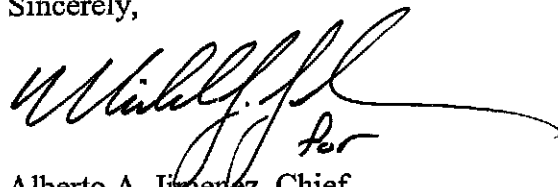
Should you encounter a safety-related problem with a motor vehicle or item of motor vehicle equipment in the future, you can contact our toll-free Hotline at 1-888-327-4236. One of our representatives may be able to assist you on matters concerning motor vehicle and motor vehicle equipment safety recalls or to report an alleged safety problem. You can also request safety information. If our telephones are busy, or you call during non-working hours, you can leave your name, telephone number, and a brief subject on our recording system. A Hotline representative will return your call.

Additionally, we have an Internet Web site at <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov> that you may want to visit. An electronic VOQ is also available on this Web site at <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/ivoq>. This form is for vehicle owners to report safety related problems about their motor vehicles or motor vehicle equipment, e.g., child safety seats, jacks, tires, brake fluid, etc. The reports submitted are transferred to our database and are used to identify safety-related defect trends that require our attention. If you do not have access to the Internet, please use the enclosed VOQ to

inform this agency of any future motor vehicle or motor vehicle equipment safety problems you may experience. Also, a summary listing of vehicle owners' complaints, safety recalls, manufacturers' service bulletins, etc., can be obtained at <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/cars/problems>.

If further assistance is needed, please contact Mr. Michael J. Jordan, Safety Defects Program Assistant, Correspondence Research Division, Office of Defects Investigation, at (202) 493-0576.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alberto A. Jimenez", with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Alberto A. Jimenez, Chief
Correspondence Research Division
Office of Defects Investigation
Enforcement

Enclosures

Ford Motor Company

RECEIVED
FORD MOTOR COMPANY
AUG 3 1998
PH 2:37
1998

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

August 3, 2001

Mr. Kenneth Weinstein
Associate Administrator for Safety Assurance
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
400 Seventh Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590

01V-255 ①

Dear Mr. Weinstein:

Re: Ford Recall No. 01S23 --1998 Model Year Ford Contour/Mercury Mystique Front Coil Springs

Summary

- Ford Action – Ford is conducting a voluntary safety recall in certain high corrosion states to install spring catcher brackets on affected vehicles to prevent a fractured spring from moving past the spring seat and contacting a front tire.
- Number of Vehicles Involved – Approximately 108,000 total vehicles manufactured at Ford's Kansas City Assembly Plant from September 9, 1996 through April 18, 1998, including approximately 82,000 originally sold or currently registered in the states of Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wisconsin and approximately 26,000 in the Canadian provinces of New Brunswick, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, and Quebec.
- Affect on Vehicle Operation –The front coil springs may fracture as a result of corrosion in high corrosion environments. In the case of the Contour/Mystique, the potential for corrosion causing a spring fracture increases with the number of miles and years in service. There is a limited potential for a fractured spring to move past the spring seat and contact a front tire. Such contact could potentially result in deflation of the tire in some cases. Ford is not aware of any accidents or injuries attributed to this concern.
- Service Procedure – Dealers will install spring catcher brackets on the affected vehicles.

Also, for the Agency's information, in a separate action Ford will notify all owners of 1998 Contour/Mystique vehicles manufactured at Ford's Kansas City Assembly Plant from



Mr. Kenneth Weinstein

- 2 -

August 3, 2001

August 27, 1996 through April 18, 1998, of a customer satisfaction program (01M08) in which Ford will provide additional warranty coverage for the front coil springs for 10 years from original date of sale of a vehicle or 150,000 miles, whichever comes first. Attached is the detailed information required by the applicable portions of 49 CFR Part 573 – Defect and Non-Compliance Information Report.

01V-255 ②

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James P. Vondale", written over a horizontal line.

James P. Vondale

Attachment

01S23

ATTACHMENT

40 CFR Part 573 – DEFECT INFORMATION REPORT
01S23 – 1998 MODEL YEAR CONTOUR/MYSTIQUE FRONT SUSPENSION COIL SPRINGS

Pursuant to Part 573 of Title 49 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Defect and Noncompliance Reports, Ford Motor Company submits the following information concerning a safety recall action that it is voluntarily initiating.

573.5 (c) (2) – Potentially Affected Vehicles

Certain 1998 model year Contour/Mystique vehicles manufactured at Ford's Kansas City Assembly Plant from September 9, 1996 through April 18, 1998 and currently registered in the states of Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wisconsin and in the Canadian provinces of New Brunswick, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, and Quebec.

Because these vehicles are not produced in VIN order, information as to the applicability of this action to specific vehicles can best be obtained by either calling Ford's toll-free line (1-800-392-3673) or contacting a local Ford dealer, who can obtain specific information regarding the vehicles from the Ford On-line Automotive Service Information System (OASIS) database.

573.5 (c) (3) – Estimated Population of Vehicles Potentially Affected

Approximately 108,000 vehicles.

573.5 (c) (4) – Estimated Percentage of Affected Vehicles with the Defect Condition

Unknown.

573.5 (c) (5) – Description of the Defect

The front coil springs may fracture as a result of corrosion in high corrosion environments. In the case of the Contour/Mystique, the potential for corrosion causing a spring fracture increases with the number of miles and years in service. There is a limited potential for a fractured spring to move past the spring seat and contact a front tire. Such contact could potentially result in deflation of the tire in some cases. As the Agency is aware, Ford has not considered spring fractures to present an unreasonable risk to safety. Owners are able to safely control a vehicle that has experienced a fractured spring, even if there has been contact with a tire or other component. Ford's belief is confirmed by a lack of accidents or injuries. Nonetheless, because we have previously conducted recalls for similar concerns we have decided to conduct a safety recall for certain 1998 model year vehicles.

573.5 (c) (6) – Chronology of Events

In June, 2000 Ford of Canada identified 15 reports of front coil spring fracture on 1998 model year Contour/Mystique vehicles. Transport Canada provided an additional report in October, 2000. Transport Canada had not identified a safety related defect in connection with coil spring failure on 1998 model year Contour/Mystique vehicles at that time and discontinued its investigation. Ford continued to monitor the field performance of the springs and identified 954 warranty claims and 79 field reports of fractured front coil springs on 1998 model year Contour/Mystique vehicles in the U.S. and Canada. None of these reports alleged an accident or injury indicating that the issue could be customer satisfaction concern, but posed no safety risk. On June 8, 2001 Transport Canada reactivated and expanded its investigation based on reports of front and rear coil spring fracture on 1995 through 1998 Contour/Mystique vehicles. (Ford and NHTSA previously investigated 1995-1997 model year Contour/Mystique front spring fractures [PE98-050] and concluded that although a failure trend existed for the front suspension coil springs on the subject vehicles operated in corrosion environments, an unreasonable risk to vehicle safety had not been demonstrated in actual service.) Unlike the 1995-1997 spring seat design, Ford's recent analysis found that the lower spring seat was changed for the 1998 model year to reduce spring stresses by modifying how the spring rests on the lower spring seat. The profile of a fractured spring might not match this new spring seat design and would then have the potential to unseat that was not present with the earlier spring seat design.

573.5 (c) (8) – Service Program

Owners of the affected vehicles will be requested to return vehicles to dealers for the installation of spring catcher brackets. There will be no charge to owners for this service. Ford anticipates that owner notification will begin the week of September 3, 2001.

573.5 (c) (9) – Press Statement and Dealer/Owner Letters

Ford does not plan to make a public statement concerning the subject matter of this action. A copy of the notification letters to dealers and owners from Ford Customer Service Division will be forwarded to the Agency when available.

573.6 (c) (11) – Recall Number

Ford has assigned campaign number 01S23 (Safety Recall) to this action.

Recall Detail

09-SEP-2005

Recall Num: 01 V 255 000 **573 Date:** 03-AUG-2001 **573 Date Rcvd:** 08-AUG-2001 **Potentially Affected:** 108,000 **Potentially Defective:** 108,000
Mfr Recall Num: 01S23
Subject: FORD/FRONT COIL SPRING CORROSION **Remedy Type:** **RP Num:** **FMVSS Num:**
Recall Type: Defect **Recall Effect:** Crash Avoidance **NHTSA Inv Num:** **Influenced by:** MFR
Problem Exp: Complaints **Manufacturer:** FORD MOTOR COMPANY **Recall Status:** CONDUCTING RECALL

Problem Descr: VEHICLE DESCRIPTION: PASSENGER VEHICLES BUILT AT THE KANSAS CITY ASSEMBLY PLANT AND CURRENTLY REGISTERED IN THE STATES OF CONNECTICUT, DELAWARE, ILLINOIS, INDIANA, IOWA, MAINE, MARYLAND, MASSACHUSETTS, MICHIGAN, MINNESOTA, MISSOURI, NEW HAMPSHIRE, NEW JERSEY, NEW YORK, OHIO, PENNSYLVANIA, RHODE ISLAND, VERMONT, WEST VIRGINIA, AND WISCONSIN, AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA. THE FRONT COIL SPRINGS MAY FRACTURE AS A RESULT OF CORROSION IN HIGH CORROSION ENVIRONMENTS. DEPENDING ON THE LOCATION OF THE FRACTURE, A BROKEN SPRING COULD MOVE PAST THE SPRING SEAT AND CONTACT A FRONT TIRE.

Consequence: SOME TIRES HAVE DEFLATED DUE TO CONTACT WITH A BROKEN SPRING.

Remedy Type: DEALERS WILL INSTALL SPRING CATCHER BRACKETS. OWNER NOTIFICATION BEGAN OCTOBER 23, 2001. OWNERS WHO TAKE THEIR VEHICLES TO AN AUTHORIZED DEALER ON AN AGREED UPON SERVICE DATE AND DO NOT RECEIVE THE FREE REMEDY WITHIN A REASONABLE TIME SHOULD CONTACT FORD AT 1-866-436-7332.

Notes: ALSO CONTACT THE NATIONAL HIGHWAY TRAFFIC SAFETY ADMINISTRATION'S AUTO SAFETY HOTLINE AT 1-888-DASH-2-DOT (1-888-327-4236).

MFR Knowl Dt:**Prod Change Dt:****Mfr Press Release Dt:****NHTSA Press Release Dt:****Stop Sales:****Regional:** Y**Supplier:****Mfr Toll Free Num:**

Products	Vehicle Usage	Beginning Mfg Date	Ending Mfg Date
Product Type :VEHICLE Manufacturer :FORD MOTOR COMPANY Make :FORD Model :CONTOUR Model Year :1998		09-SEP-1996	18-APR-1998
Product Type :VEHICLE Manufacturer :FORD MOTOR COMPANY Make :MERCURY Model :MYSTIQUE Model Year :1998		09-SEP-1996	18-APR-1998

Component Name

SUSPENSION:FRONT:SPRINGS:COIL SPRINGS

Influencing Investigation(s)

Investigation Num	Subject	Investigator	Relationship
-------------------	---------	--------------	--------------

Related Recalls

Yr	Type	Major Sub	Relationship
----	------	-----------	--------------

Recall Characteristics**Unique Recall****Unique Descr**

Regional recall

Recall Detail

09-SEP-2005

Recall Communications**Fax Ack:** 20-AUG-2001**Letter Ack:****Draft 577 Received:** 20-AUG-2001**Draft 577 Approved:** 23-AUG-2001**Final 577 Received:****Owner Notification:** 23-OCT-2001**Phased:** N**577 End:****Renotification:** 22-FEB-2002**Envelope Approved:****Dealer Notification****Received:****Dealer Notification:**