NHTSA ccmMercury Routing Slip

Petition

Printed: 4/5/2011

NHTSA #: ES11-002490	Rec'd Date: 3/29/2011	Referred By: NPO-011
XREF #:	Doc Type: PET	Doc Date: 3/23/2011
Delivery: REG	Address To:	**Due Date: 7/28/2011**
S10 #:	DOT/I #:	RMP #:

Subject: PETITION TO REQUIRE ALL VEHICLES TO BE EQUIPPED WITH AN ON-OFF SWITCH TO DEACTIVATE THE AIRBAGS FOR UNOCCUPIED SEATS

Ack Date:	Ack By:	
Sign Office: ENFORCEMENT	Signature: HARRIS	Signed For:
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File Loc:	XREF File:	**Closed Date:**
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Assigned To	Task	Asgn Date	Deadline	Returned Date
NVS-200	REPLY	4/5/2011	7/28/2011	
NVS-010	INFORMATION	4/5/2011		4/5/2011

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March 23, 2011

Administrator
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
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PETITION

Many vehicles, such as my 2001 Ford Focus, are equipped with air bags, all of which deploy, regardless of whether the seats are occupied, if the left front (driver) side air bag deploys.

The damage caused by a right front (passenger side) air bag deployment is substantial. It causes the windshield to shatter, and the damage done to the dashboard is so substantial that the entire dashboard assembly must be replaced. With no occupant in the right front seat, this is unnecessary damage.

The cost to repair such unnecessary damages is borne by the insurance companies, for those who are insured, but they pass these costs to their clients through increased premiums. For older vehicles, such damage costs are often so high that, when added to the cost of the other repairs, may very well exceed the threshold that determines whether the insurance company will pay for the repairs, or write the vehicle off as a total loss. In some states, such as Illinois, if the insurance company decides that the vehicle will be written off as a total loss, they send the owner a check for what they decide the vehicle is worth. The owner, however, must surrender the vehicle. He does not have the option of accepting the check and using his own money to pay for repairs. When this happens, the owner will purchase another car. Of course, the auto manufacturers are in the business of selling new cars, so this policy is good for them.

This problem, however, is not unavoidable. It could be avoided by putting a sensor in the seats that would close a circuit when it would sense that a person is in a seat, but have the circuit open when the seat would be unoccupied. These sensors need not be sophisticated ones like the dynamic automatic suppression system (DASS). They could be as unsophisticated as the one in the 1972 Ford Pinto (that I once owned), where a seatbelt warning buzzer would be heard if there would be at least 40 lbs. in a seat with that seat's seatbelt unattached.

An even simpler method to prevent activation of airbags in unoccupied seats would be a simple on-off switch controlled by the driver.

I am requesting, therefore, that auto manufacturers be required to conduct a recall of all vehicles that allow activation of airbags in unoccupied seats, so that they can be retrofitted with either sensors (that would stop such activations in unoccupied seats) or driver-controlled switches (where drivers could turn the switches off to prevent airbag deployment in unoccupied seats). In addition, for those vehicles with damage caused by airbag deployment in

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unoccupied seats, that auto manufacturers be required to perform such repairs at no cost to the vehicle owner.

Sincerely,

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USA FIRST-CLASS FOREVER

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