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10154114

APR - 7 2006

The Honorable Jean Schmidt
Member, U.S. House of Representatives
8044 Montgomery Road, Suite 540
Cincinnati, OH 45236

NVS-216 mec
Ref. No: 10154114

Dear Congresswoman Schmidt:

Thank you for your facsimile dated March 22 on behalf of your constituents, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] wrote concerning problems they encountered with their model year (MY) 1997 Mercury Grand Marquis vehicle.

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 the report you provided on behalf of [REDACTED] and the report they provided to the Vehicle Safety Hotline on January 9. 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 is warranted.

On January 3, 2003, NHTSA's Office of Defects Investigation opened a recall query investigation (RQ03-002) to further evaluate the alleged failure reports of the ball joints in certain MY 1995 through MY 1997 Ford Motor Company vehicles other than those identified in NHTSA safety recall campaign 98V-322000 (summary enclosed). On June 3, 2003, the investigation was closed. No safety-related defect trend was identified based on the relatively low complaint rate and the lack of any crashes or injuries. A recent review of our database revealed no basis for revisiting this issue. A copy of the investigation's resume and the closing report is enclosed for [REDACTED]'s information.

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We have also reviewed our database in an effort to identify whether a safety defect trend exists with regard to manifold failures in 1997 Mercury Grand Marquis vehicles. At this time, there is insufficient evidence to warrant opening a safety defect 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.

I hope this information is helpful. If you have any questions, please have your staff contact me or Mr. Ronald L. Medford, Senior Associate Administrator for Vehicle Safety, at (202) 366-1810.

Sincerely yours,

Original Signed By

Michael W. Harrington
Director of External Affairs

Enclosures

cc: Washington Office

NHTSA: NVS-210: Congressional Response

NVS-216: mec 66257

NHTSA Control No. ES06-001862

ODI Control No. 10154114

Draft: mec 03/30/06

Revised:

Final: mec 04/5/06

cc:

NVS-010, I10, I20

NEC-110, NIA-110

NVS-200, NVS-216

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