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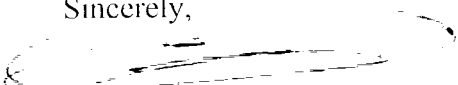
NHTSA
Office of Defects Investigation, NVS-216 400 7th St. SW
Washington, DC 20590

Dear NHTSA Representative:

I have attached a copy of the letter I sent to Ford Motor Corporation and the work order performed on our Ford Explorer. Based on feedback from the Ford Service Advisor and from our own personal experience, we believe an investigation by NHTSA is warranted. Although Ford Motor Company stated other Ford Explorers had this problem, our Ford Explorer was not on the same list for this recall problem. This does not sound right. Especially if the same problem happened to our vehicle.

The possibility of the rear hatch window falling off a Ford Explorer (due to a faulty window hinge) is a safety issue. Please investigate this matter and inform consumers about the potential danger of this dilemma.

Sincerely,



Sacramento, CA 

July 25, 2006

Ford Motor Company
Customer Relations Center
16800 Executive Plaza Drive
P.O. Box 6248
Dearborn, Michigan 48121

Dear Ford representative:

This letter is to complain about the poor customer service I received on my Ford Explorer recently. I wish this letter would reinforce Ford's perception of "Quality" vehicles and service - but it only magnifies how American automobile manufacturers are so behind the auto manufacturers from Japan in terms of service and quality products.

Background

On July 8, 2006, one of the liftgate hinges snapped off as my wife opened the rear glass window on our Ford Explorer. The broken hinge also caused the rear glass to scrape the paint (to the metal) on the upper rear portion of our vehicle when the glass broke off the hinge. When I called the local Ford dealership, they advised me that they were aware of the problem of faulty hinges and to bring my vehicle in for repairs. Our service advisor, Garret Blank, had even expressed to me that another Ford owner had a similar problem, but their window had literally fallen off the hinges and narrowly missed their child in the stroller.

Unfortunately, Mr. Blank looked up our VIN number and realized it was not on Ford's list of items recalled for this vehicle. He even stated that it was unusual our vehicle not being on the recall list since he seen so many Explorers with the same problem. Hence, I had two choices; drive off the Ford facilities with our rear window hanging on by one hinge or have your Ford facilities repair the broken hinge. Based on their estimate of \$52.25, I decided to leave the vehicle for repairs. On Monday morning, July 10, 2006, Mr. Blank called me and advised me that the cost to repair the damaged hinges was now \$297.15. How an estimate can go from \$53.25 to \$297.15 fathoms me to this day. However, I gave Mr. Blank my approval to repair our vehicle. What choice did I have? Leave the Ford facilities with a loose hanging rear window?

Understanding Ford's Recall Protocols

When I picked-up our vehicle, I expressed to Mr. Blank my dissatisfaction with how Ford handles recalls. He expressed to me that production dates and safety issues determine if a specific vehicle is on recall list. However, it really does not make any sense why Ford recalls some vehicles and not others though. A Ford Explorer is a Ford Explorer. I am sure identical parts are used on every U.S. Explorer sold or repaired here in the United States. There might be a few exceptions, such as unique equipment to meet vehicle emission restrictions by individual state, but a simple window hinge? I don't think so. I am sure it would be more efficient for Ford to use identical window hinges for the same vehicle in each state. It just would not be cost effective. But more importantly, if a rear window can fall off due to a faulty hinge - that is a safety issue. Period.

Communication Nightmare

One of my issues was to raise the recall issue to an individual of authority who would listen and respect what a consumer said about their particular product or service.

Our service advisor, Mr. Blank, suggested that we directly contact Ford corporate ourselves since there was nothing he could do for us and voice our concern with them. I dialed 1-800-392-3673 and spoke with Heather. She said I should speak with the Ford dealership where we had purchased our vehicle for assistance since there was nothing she could do. I asked to speak with her supervisor. She said that her supervisor would say the same thing. I politely asked again to speak with her supervisor. She apologized, but still refused me the opportunity to converse with her supervisor. My question to Ford corporate, why have a customer department if they are unable or unwilling to help a consumer? Consumers don't need a "sounding board", it just adds to their frustration. They need a company that is truly willing to listen to their concerns.

I contacted the dealership where I purchased our vehicle from, Folsom Lake Ford. The customer service manager, Kendall, said there was nothing they could do, and I should speak with someone from corporate (since they were only a franchise) or at the Ford dealership that performed the service work on the repair of the rear window. I was in the Bermuda Triangle of finger pointing. Regardless of which Ford dealership I had purchased or serviced my Explorer – it was always at a Ford dealership. Unfortunately, everyone associated with Ford Motor Company was redirecting my concern to someone else associated with Ford. Nobody was taking responsibly for my concern.

However, an individual did contact me the next day from Ford Corporate. His name was Greg. I believe he must have been a supervisor at your customer service department in your corporate offices. He was very apologetic but confirmed what everyone else was saying. If I had brought our vehicle to the dealership where we had originally purchased the vehicle from (Folsom Lake Ford) or had the rear window repaired at the dealership where most of our service was completed at (Elk Grove Ford), perhaps the service manager at either of these facilities could have done something to lesson the out-of-pocket expenses I had occurred with the faulty hinges. Funny, I thought I was dealing with Ford Motor Company, instead of a corporate hierarchy of bureaucratic policies.

The Bottom Line

I am also currently looking at repairing the body damage caused by your faulty hinge – which just adds insult to injury. We will purchase another vehicle in the near future. Fortunately for us, a Ford vehicle is definitely not on that list. I can also say I will never recommend Ford to anyone. Your “passing-the-buck” approach says a lot about Ford Motor Company. It exemplifies your company policy that profits are more important than the safety of your customers. You have lost a loyal customer.

Sincerely

Sacramento, CA

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).