



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 100148

Date Received

18 PM 2:15
04-OCT-2006

Repository

Reference No.
10169926

OWNER INFORMATION (Type or Print)

Name [REDACTED]
Address [REDACTED]
City PANAMA CITY State FL Zip Code [REDACTED]

Daytime Telephone Number [REDACTED]

E-mail Address [REDACTED]

Evening Telephone Number [REDACTED]

Do you authorize NHTSA to provide a copy of this report to the manufacturer of your vehicle? YES NO
In the absence of a signature, please provide your name or address to the vehicle manufacturer.
Signature of Owner [REDACTED] Date 08/12/06

VEHICLE INFORMATION

17 digit Vehicle Identification Number Located at bottom of windshield on driver's side
SALME1145 [REDACTED] Make LAND ROVER Model RANGE ROVER Model Year 2003
Date Purchased 01-DEC-04 Dealer's Name and Telephone Number LANDROVER OF LOUISVILLE UNKNOWN Engine: No: Cylinders 8 Fuel Type: Gas
Original Owner Dealer's City LOUISVILLE State KY Zip Code 40222
Transmission Type Antilock Brakes Powertrain 4 WHEEL DRIVE Vehicle Component Code 105500 POWER TRAIN:DRIVELINE:DIFFERENTIAL UNIT
AUTOMATIC Cruise Control Multiple Failure: 1

FAILED COMPONENT(S)/PART(S) INFORMATION

Incident Date(s) 02-OCT-2006 Failure Mileage 72000 Failure Speed 55 Front Driveshaft

ADDITIONAL ITEMS TO BE COMPLETED WHEN REPORTING A TIRE FAILURE

Tire Make [REDACTED] Tire Model (Name or Number) [REDACTED] Tire Size (Example P215/65R15) [REDACTED]
DOT No. (Example: DOTM9ABC036) Original Equipment Prior Repair Failure Location: [REDACTED]
Tire Component Code [REDACTED] Tire Failure Type [REDACTED]

ADDITIONAL ITEMS TO BE COMPLETED WHEN REPORTING A CHILD SEAT FAILURE

Make: [REDACTED] Date Manufactured: [REDACTED] Model No./Name: [REDACTED]
Seat Type: [REDACTED] Installation System: [REDACTED]
Child Seat Component Code: [REDACTED] Failed Part: [REDACTED]

APPLICABLE INCIDENT INFORMATION

(Please describe in detail the incident(s), Failure(s), Crash(es), and injury (ies).)

Crash Yes No Fire Yes No Number of Persons Injured [REDACTED] Number of Deaths [REDACTED] Reported to Police 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).

DT*: THE CONTACT STATED WHILE DRIVING 55 MPH ON THE HIGHWAY, THERE WAS GRINDING NOISE FOLLOWED BY THE ILLUMINATION OF THE NEUTRAL LIGHT ON THE INSTRUMENT CLUSTER PANEL. THE CONTACT MANAGED TO PULL THE VEHICLE OVER WITHOUT INCIDENT. IT WAS TOWED TO A DEALER WHO DETERMINED THE FRONT DIFFERENTIAL WAS FRACTURED AND NEEDED TO BE REPLACED. THE MANUFACTURER WAS NOT CONTACTED.

Include, if available: Police/Fire Department Report, Photos, and Repair Invoice.

ATTACH ADDITIONAL SHEETS IF NECESSARY

The Privacy Act of 1974-Public Law 93-579 This information is requested pursuant to authority vested in the National Highway Traffic Safety Act and subsequent amendments. You are under no obligation to respond to this questionnaire. Your response may be used to assist the NHTSA in determining whether a Manufacturer should take appropriate action to correct a safety defect. If the NHTSA proceeds with administrative enforcement or litigation against a manufacturer, your response, or a statistical summary thereof, may be used in support of the agency's action.

Panama City, FL

October 4, 2006

Mr. Alan Mulally
Chief Executive Officer
Ford Motor Company
P.O. Box 1899
Dearborn, MI 48121

Dear Sir:

I am writing this letter because I felt it imperative that you be personally appraised of a situation that involves a known product defect that directly impacts the safety of passengers in Ford products. I know you just became CEO, but I think you should be aware of this serious design defect.

On September 29, my wife, my son and I were driving our 2003 Range Rover to the Jacksonville, FL International Airport to catch a flight. Suddenly the vehicle gave a lurch, a horrible grinding sound began and I lost all power. My display said to put the vehicle in neutral. I did so and was just able to steer the vehicle to a safe stop off the busy freeway. We are very fortunate my family and I weren't killed as a result of this incident.

I had the vehicle towed to the Land Rover dealership-Matheny Imports, Inc. I discussed this failure with the mechanics, and discovered they were aware of a defect with the front differential on the new Range Rover. A front differential would normally be expected to last the life of the vehicle, but on the new Range Rover introduced in 2002 it is a major failure item. Since the technicians know there is a design problem, I was amazed there is still no safety recall or redesign of the components involved, although more than one service bulletin has been produced on the subject.

According to the dealership, the problem lies in the design of the front driveshaft, which has no flexible coupling at the front end, so any minor misalignment puts severe stress on the front differential input splines, leading to failure and immobilization of the vehicle.

The cause of the problem is stress on the front driveshaft and front differential input due to misalignment. The front differential is mounted on the left side of the engine crankcase, which was strengthened in the design process to accommodate this arrangement. The front diff receives its input from the front driveshaft, which comes forward from the transfer case. Because the engine is bolted directly to the transmission, and the transmission to the transfer case, the designers (not unreasonably) must have assumed the whole structure would be perfectly rigid and the usual arrangement of CV joints, U-joints or flexible couplings used on the front drive shafts of lesser 4X4's would not be needed. However, they did provide a flexible coupling at the rear end of the driveshaft, where it attaches to the transfer case, but not on the front end where it goes into the differential. Accordingly, no problems have been reported at the transfer case end, but the connection to the front differential fails far more frequently than it should, often wrecking the entire differential with it. An obvious cure would be to

provide some form of flexible coupling at the front end of the driveshaft, but to date Land Rover has not issued a recall to fix this dangerous design flaw.

The mechanics said this was a common problem and that Land Rover North America was well aware there was a defect with this differential and that it could happen again after it was repaired. Fortunately, I purchased the extended warranty when I bought the vehicle, so majority of the parts and labor costs are covered. I am still obligated to pay the deductible, the towing charge and my family's overnight hotel stay. As a loyal Land Rover customer who has owned 5 of your SUVs, I would hope you would authorize reimbursement of the non-covered expenses.

My research has shown that, rather than address the problem via redesign, Land Rover's approach to the problem seems to be just checking for correct alignment of the front differential. A series of technical bulletins were issued on the matter. In 2005 a steady trickle of owners continued reporting the front diff failures, some for the second time. It was unclear whether the earlier service bulletins had resolved the issue. In November 2005 bulletin 121 was updated and re-issued. The changes were minor, such as incorporating provision for new pre-drilled propeller shafts if replacement is required. The affected vehicle range remained the same, so the official story seems to be that the problem is solved and does not exist on models built after July 3rd, 2003. However, failures continue to occur even on 2005 models.

Interestingly, in March 2005, Land Rover filed a Foreign Field Action Report with the NHTSA to report its worldwide campaign back in June 2003. This was described as a "customer satisfaction" action rather than a defect or safety issue, and the wording made an effort to blame the customer for ignoring the "excessive noise" due to the spline wear that preceded the failures: "Premature wear of front differential splines has been identified on gas and diesel Range Rover. The wear is caused by a misalignment of the front differential to transfer gearbox output flange and results in excessive noise. If the customer does not seek service when symptoms of noise are noticed, or symptoms are ignored, and condition is not corrected, there is potential for failure of these splines that could result in loss of drive."

Sadly, the official fix seems to be no more than a temporary expedient to get the vehicles past the warranty period in the hope that owners will have to pay for subsequent repairs themselves. I ask you to check with your Land Rover dealerships and with the National Highway Traffic and Safety Administration to determine the extent of reported problems with the new Range Rover front differentials and to then order a safety recall and redesign before some family is killed as a result of this design defect.

I expect Ford to thoroughly investigate this apparent defect immediately and take appropriate action, either in conjunction with Land Rover or on its own. Your prompt attention to this safety issue is appreciated.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]