

CL-10208265-5673


Panama City, FL

2007 OCT 29 AM 10:45

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October 19, 2007

Ms Nicole Nason
Administrator
NHTSA Headquarters
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
West Building
Washington, DC 20590

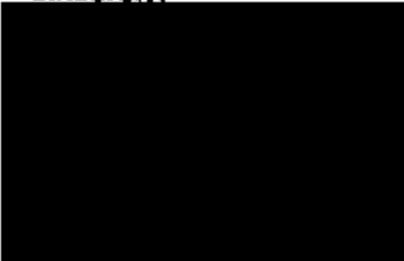
Dear Ms Nason:

Last year and earlier this year, I wrote the President of Ford Motor Company to express concern about a product safety defect in the Range Rover that had endangered the lives of my family. I asked that he do something about this known product defect so that other families would be spared the terrifying experience my family endured.

Without waiting for a response from Ford, I filed an on-line incident report with your agency to express my concern. I learned NHTSA has opened what it calls a 'Preliminary Examination' of the problem. Can you give me an update on exactly what your agency is doing, and when can we Range Rover owners expect a recall that requires Land Rover to permanently fix this dangerous problem?

Copies of my correspondence with Ford (as yet, unanswered) are enclosed for your review.

Sincerely,



End

AA
10/29/07
LG

[REDACTED]
Panama City, FL
[REDACTED]

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 apprised 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.

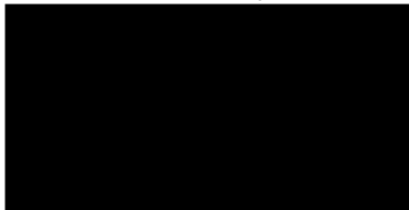
The mechanics said this was a common problem and that Land Rover North America was well aware there was a defect with this differential and that it could happen again after it was repaired. Fortunately, I purchased the extended warranty when I bought the vehicle, so majority of the parts and labor costs 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 2003 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 dealership 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.



[REDACTED]
Panama City, FL
[REDACTED]

July 30, 2007

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

Dear Mr. Mulally:

On October 4, 2006 I wrote you a letter (copy attached) concerning the failure of the front differential in my Range Rover. When I did not receive a reply, I assumed you had sent it to the President of Land Rover North America for a reply, and he had determined the failure was an isolated incident.

I was recently contacted by the NHTSA regarding the incident report I filed with the agency. According to the individual who contacted me, the agency had received 38 complaints with 17 owners saying that the failure occurred while driving at speeds over 40 mph. 16 owners said the vehicle needed to be towed for repair after the failures, while eight complained they had experienced two failures of the front differential and/or front driveshaft. The NHTSA has opened what it calls a 'Preliminary Examination' of the problem.

As one who has purchased five of your Land Rover SUVs, I am very worried for the safety of my family while driving or riding in these vehicles, and I would appreciate the courtesy of a reply to my original letter of concern.

[REDACTED]

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