

CL-10213910-6843

Youngstown, NY

Dec, 14, 2007

2008 JAN -2 AM 9: 23

United States Department of Transportation
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue, West Building
Washington DC, 20590
Attn: Associate Administrator for Safety Assurance

Re: automotive defect (the following vehicle)

1998 Signature Lincoln Towncar, vin 1LNFM82WXWY [REDACTED]
purchased new July 27, 1998 from Ed Taylor Agency in Buffalo NY
present car mileage: 81626
registered to: Virginia [REDACTED] (my wife) since purchased
this car has always been garaged at the above right address
this car has always had its NY State inspection done by Coppins garage in Lewiston, NY

Dear Sir:

On 12/7/07 I pulled into the parking lot of a business about 20 miles from home when I heard a grinding sound coming from under the car. I drove a short distance to a parking spot and looked under the front end of the car. I saw a ball joint dragging on the ground connected to a rod still attached to the car. Needless to say I didn't move it again and called a tow truck. It was taken to Coppins garage in Lewiston NY and all of the front end ball joints were replaced. The old ball joints had no grease fittings but they do now. It has been an excellent car and my wife wanted to keep it.

On the web I was chagrined to find a Dec. 1998 recall that describes my area of concern. It addresses "SUSPENSION:FRONT:CONTROL ARM:LOWER BALL JOINT". No word of this problem was ever given us.

Should this eventual failure have been found by Coppins during the car's annual state mandated inspection? Routine service was also performed here during the year.

My son bought a new car that was advertised (as was the Lincoln), "lubricated for life". Since he does his own maintenance, he checked the ball joints and found they all had threaded holes in them for a grease fittings but plugs were inserted instead. He took out the plugs and put in grease fittings that he uses regularly. Is this common practice? He gets a lot of credit for seeing a problem that Ford did not.

I feel very lucky that this failure did not take place at highway speeds and result in loss of control.

Truly yours,

ET
01/02/08
KB