CI-10409490-5882

INFORMATION Redacted PURSUANT TO THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT (FOIA), 5 U.S.C . 552(B)(6)

NOV 1 8 2011

November 16, 2011

FAX ONLY
(202) 366-7882
(202) 366-3081

MR FRANK BORRIS
DEFECTS INVESTIGATION
U S DEPT OF TRANSPORTATION
NATIONAL HIGHWAY TRAFFIC SAFETY ADM
1200 NEW JERSEY AVE SE WEST BLDG
WASHINGTON DC 20590

RE: FORD E-150 VAN WAGONS (2008-2011)
2011 E-150 CLUB VAN XL PASSENGER WAGON WITH TOWING PACKAGE
VIN #1FMNE1BW1BD[redacted]

Dear Mr. Borris:

For reference purposes, please see the attached faxes of November 14, 2011 and November 15, 2011 to William "Bill" Weigel and the fax to BBB of Louisville dated November 15, 2011.

Please observe that "Medley's" confirmed that there was a sway bar problem that should be repaired and honored under warranty by Ford Motor Company. Medley's refused to help and refuse to go on record because they are an independent Ford contractor that has a large revenue stream from Ford.

Mr. William "Bill" Weigel is also a proprietor of a local company that specializes in truck suspensions. The E-150 is a truck cargo/passenger van.

Please observe that in light of the sway bar photographs that were sent to BBB of Virginia, which were the same photographs that you received, BBB of Virginia has indicated that the photographic information and the risk and hazards volunteered by Medley's and Mr. Weigel is to be concealed from the mechanic prior to a test drive to be performed in the near future.

This is the type of negligence that can cause death on our highways. BBB of Virginia, after bringing the risks and hazards to their attention, still wants the mechanic to test drive the vehicle at 70 mph during windy conditions, i.e. a stress test so to speak under strained conditions. BBB of Virginia says the defective sway bar equipment risks cannot be voiced to the mechanic prior to a test drive, which as you know places the mechanic at risk and creates grounds for gross negligence.

Here we have a situation where no one in the mediation process has visually inspected the defective sway bar equipment which as you know based on photographs is locked up and jammed from a sway movement from the driver's side to the passenger side. Mr. Weigel also receives contracted business from Ford Motor Company. It is a company like his and a company like Medley's that corrects all of the problems that purchasers of Ford trucks are

November 16, 2011
Mr. Frank Borris

encountering. Mr. Weigel indicates that he has a conscience and he is not afraid to speak the truth and voice his concerns.

Mr. Weigel was puzzled and concerned as to why the design was changed after year 2009 to where the sway bar is now connected to links and not through the frame suspension as shown in the 2005 van photographs that were provided. He contends this is the reason for the sway bar movement. What he recently mentioned that has not been pointed out before is that there is tremendous strain on the links that are severely slanted but should be vertical. The links in the photos are severely pivoted and these links are under extreme pressure. He indicated that the sway bar link on either side could easily break under such stress and then the sway bar is going to fall down on top of the steering rod, become entangled and then probably cause a fatal accident.

When I pulled the van into Mr. Weigel's lot at his business my wheels were slightly angled. This provided access through the wheel well where Mr. Weigel grabbed the sway bar and, in light of it being in a jammed position, was able to slightly wiggle the sway bar. He turned to me and indicated that the sway bar should be stiff and should not be moved ever so slightly by grabbing the bar with one's hand and agitating the sway bar. We are talking about slight movement when there should be absolutely no movement at all.

"Hellwig", a suspension specialist, indicates these factory sway bars are hollow in which case the sway bar hitting the sway bar bracket (metal to metal), it could cause the bar or bracket to break.

It should be easy for anyone at NHTSA to determine if a link broke it would fall on top of the steering rod and result in catastrophic consequences. All that is necessary is to look underneath the bumper.

Thanks for consideration on this matter and have a good day.

Yours truly,

[redacted]
Louisville KY [redacted]
[redacted]

cc: **FAX ONLY**
(937) 666-3590
MR ROGER SAUL
VEHICLE RESEARCH & TEST CTR
U S DEPT OF TRANSPORTATION

FAX ONLY
(202) 366-1767
MR RANDY REED

November 14, 2011

FAX ONLY
583-3408

MR BILL WEIGLE
BILL'S AUTO SPRING SERVICE
827-833 S 15TH T
LOUISVILLE KY 40210

RE: 2011 E-150 FORD CLUB WAGON
VIN #1FMNE1BW1BD[redacted]WITH TOWING PACKAGE
SWAY BAR WITH TAB & LINK DESIGN

Dear Mr. Weigle:

Thanks for examining the above described van wagon truck on the morning of November 12. If I recall correctly, the following comments and conclusions were drawn:

- The anti-sway bar aka sway bar is stuck and jammed caused from a driver to passenger side sway bar shift.
- The sway bar is making metal-to-metal contact with the driver side bracket.
- Both links are angled toward the front passenger side wheel and are not in a normal position.
- The sway bar is not positioned in its correct field.
- The sway bar and links in their present position are symptomatic of a dangerous condition and should not be driven.
- The sway bar links are severely pivoted which could break resulting in the sway bar dropping down and entangling with the steering rods.
- The sway bar and links are causing control issues.

I probably left something out but would appreciate these statements and any other additional statements made in writing over your company letterhead.

[redacted]
Louisville KY[redacted]
[redacted]

November 15, 2011

FAX ONLY
583-3408

MR WILLIAM "BILL" WEIGEL
BILL'S AUTO SPRING SERVICE
827-833 S 15TH T
LOUISVILLE KY 40210

RE: 2011 E-150 FORD CLUB WAGON
VIN #1FMNE1BW1BD[redacted] WITH TOWING PACKAGE
SWAY BAR WITH TAB & LINK DESIGN

Dear Mr. Weigel:

Sorry I misspelled your last name in the previous fax. I am sure you have been called worse ☺.

Something that may have occurred to you but not me at the time of my visit to your company on November 12 would be how the control issues would affect the end of my fishing boat trailer that extends 30 ft. beyond the ball hitch. When I am traveling down a 2-lane highway the base of the trailer typically is only about six inches from the center line or the shoulder of the road. I have never even attempted to try and trailer my boat as I was cautioned not to in light of the control problems being experienced. You know how it has the "crack the whip" effect whereby if control issues start at the front of the van it is greatly magnified by the time the movement in the front makes its way to the end of the trailer. Feel free to add your comments to the commentary that I have requested.

I did not use the word "vertical" in describing the proper position of the sway bar links. Of course, I am not a suspension specialist and I do not know if tongue weight being transferred to the rear of the vehicle at the towing ball would have any consequential effect on the sway that we are experiencing. What appears strange to us is that there is horizontal movement of the sway bar. I understand that the sway bar is supposed to eliminate a rocking effect like a wave hitting the side of the boat but we have experienced that as well.

My wife used to work as a laboratory technician at Brown Foreman – one of your business neighbors. She knows how to use a caliper that was borrowed from Haas Auto Parts and Machine. They were the ones that volunteered that under no circumstances should any attempt be made to tow anything with the 2011 E-150 Club Wagon until the control problems were corrected. We have faxed to you that the 2011 sway bar had a 1.020 inch OD reading and the 2005 had 1.015 inch OD.

November 15, 2011
Mr. William Weigel

I had a conversation with Dave Wheeler, Chief Engineer at Hellwig and a suspension specialist at 3:17 p.m. EST on August 8. Being the lead engineer, Mr. Wheeler offered to repair the van free of charge and guarantee satisfaction provided I transport the vehicle to Hellwig. It was for future product development.

Mr. Wheeler came up with your same conclusion that a front sway bar was needed to be bolted directly into the frame suspension and that a rear anti-sway bar was likewise needed. Perhaps high performance shock absorbers and he added polyethylene bushings. He seemed to think this would solve all of the control issues that we were encountering.

I spoke with Mr. Bennie Asnoma, a Service Technician at Roadmaster in Vancouver WA. This occurred on August 4 at 11:56 a.m. Mr. Asnoma confirmed that all of the symptoms I described were indicative of sway. He drew the same conclusions drawn by Mr. Wheeler at Hellwig in Washington. Mr. Asnoma, like you, cautioned that the vehicle should not be driven until properly repaired. He concurred that the conditions would prompt the driver to over steer as a knee-jerk reaction to the "sway".

Prior to discussing this with Mr. Dave Wheeler I talked to a consultant at Hellwig Products. This consultant told me that OEM sway bars are typically hollow. He indicated that Hellwig solid sway bars are 1 ½ inch minimum in thickness built with No. 4141 tempered steel that has memory. He indicated that the typical factory sway bar is made of No. 1060 rolled steel, which is typically inferior and has no memory retention. He noted that these types of replacement sway bars are greater in diameter than OEM products and not anchored by links or tabs.

In the discussion I had with Virginia at Downtown Ford, who is the Service Manager there, she stated that left to right movement of the sway bar was normal and it was likewise normal of metal to metal contact with the steering bracket. The Hellwig technician and Roadmaster technician stated that it is acceptable if sway bars rotate slightly up and down within the bracket but that shifting to the right or left side aka "walking" is not normal and this is a symptom of the sway bar being grossly inadequate and defective. The Hellwig and Roadmaster consultants also stated that beefed up springs in the 10-ply tires create a much different platform below the body and, as I suspected, "not forgiving".

Enclosed is a letter that I directed to Virginia at Downtown Ford dated August 4, 2011. I spoke with a technical consulted at Performance Suspension Technologies (PST) on the morning of August 7. After describing my experiences with the E-150 2011 Van, Mr. Moore indicated that the 2011 model was changed to serve truck characteristics at the expense of passenger transport and pulling a trailer. He stated that the van as a passenger van with a towing package is not safe and not suitable for travel at a high rate of speed such as between 50 mph and 70 mph.

November 15, 2011
Mr. William Weigel

Mr. Moore stated that the van is top heavy and the center of gravity was raised creating more instability. Mr. Moore indicated that the classic symptoms I was described was because the van could not handle wind deflection that is necessary to prevent sway. Mr. Moore stated that the sway bar is grossly undersized and under no circumstances should there be a right to left shift aka "walking" as is the case with my van. Mr. Moore had no incentive to sell me anything or gain from the expertise he was providing because their company did not have sway bars to fit my needs to correct the problem.

Basically, we have three suspension experts that concur with your analysis and these people have the advantage of Engineering Departments. This is a tribute to your expertise and knowledge that you have gained over the years.

I have enclosed a "Cruisers Forum". Mentioned are the same E-150 platforms that are used in light duty recreational vehicles. Attached you will also find a copy of the Technical Service Bulletin (TSB) because there were a rash of complaints about "wandering" which is the same thing I was experiencing. The Field Rep, Mr. Michyna, was perplexed and did not know how to diagnose the problem. After waiting two weeks to come up with a solution to the sway that I was experiencing, he told the shop foreman at Downtown Ford to adjust the steering gear mesh which almost caused another accident. We would have to turn the steering wheel half way around before the wheels would react.

Finally, enclosed is an incident that happened to an owner of a Club Van Wagon just like mine. He describes two near death accidents, both occurring at a rate of speed between 65 mph and 75 mph under windy conditions but these wind conditions are not considered severe. It is what you are going to encounter any time a storm pops up when you are traveling.

I look forward to receiving via letter that you will send me that includes the bulleted items that I emphasized in my earlier fax to you. You may want to add something about potential towing issues and confirmation of the 3/4 ton capacity springs creating a higher center of gravity that could exasperate or add to the sway problems.

Thanks so much for your help and have a good day.

[redacted]
Louisville KY [redacted]
[redacted]

FAXED

August 4, 2011

FAX ONLY
584-2278

VIRGINIA – SERVICE MANAGER
DOWNTOWN FORD
809 S 5TH ST
LOUISVILLE KY 40203

RE: 2011 ECONOLINE FORD CLUB VAN WAGON
VIN# 1FMNE1BW1BD[redacted]
WITH TOWING PACKAGE

Dear Virginia:

In conducting further research on the "sway" issue, properly engineered anti-sway bars will eliminate "body roll" aka sway. In addition, correct anti-sway bars will reduce and eliminate sway on long sweeping corners, on and off ramps as well as emergency maneuvers.

The better anti-sway bars are built with additional mounting points and adjustable helm joint in links to eliminate undesirable handling characteristics of the current suspension setup such as "over-steer" or "under-steer".

The text of the abovementioned paragraph was taken directly from an "Anti-Sway Bar" website.

I also spoke with a consultant at Hellwig Products. Their "solid" sway bars are 1 ½ inch minimum, sometimes wider, built with No. 4141 tempered steel that has memory. The typical factory sway bar is made of No. 1060 rolled steel which is typically inferior. That type of steel has no memory retention. It is not tempered either. These types of sway bars are greater in diameter than OEM and not anchored by links or tabs.

You had indicated to me that you confirmed that the roll bar on my E-150 2011 van had shifted to the right where metal was touching metal. You stated this was "normal". According to the Hellwig technician and a Roadmaster technician it is okay if sway bars rotate slightly up and down within the bracket but that shifting to the right side or left side aka "walking" is not normal and is a symptom of the sway bar being grossly inadequate and defective.

The Hellwig consultant and a Roadmaster consultant also stated that beefed up springs and the 10-ply tires create a much different platform below the body and as I suspected is "not forgiving". Larger, beefier springs and stiff 10-ply tires and possibly defective rubber bushings (like the cracked shock absorber bushing), according to these consultants, would be

significant contributors to creating sway as more pressure is being exerted between the frame and the body.

The "wandering" that consumers are experiencing is "sway" and then the driver panics with a desperate attempt to correct the sway by grabbing the steering wheel and turning it in the opposite direction of the sway thus creating over steer.

I find it particularly upsetting that you stated to me that the "shift of the sway bar to the right where metal is touching metal is normal", which according to the suspension experts at Hellwig and Roadmaster is not.

The fact that the body is 2-3 inches higher than on my 2005 model suggests a greater separation from the frame and thereby creating a greater probability of sway. In summary, stiff tires, inadequate sway bar, and a 2-3 inch higher clearance from the body to the street suggests that the additional pressure is too much for the inadequate sway bar to handle.

The 2011 E-150 exhibits every characteristic that a properly engineered front and rear sway bar is supposed to correct.

Finally, the consultant confirmed that it was vitally important when towing behind the E-150 that "sway" has to be totally eliminated before any attempt is made to tow a boat and trailer. When "sway" is encountered, the driver tries to correct with turning the steering wheel in the opposite direction causing "whiplash" to whatever is being towed. What is towed then goes into a ditch or crosses the dividing line into oncoming traffic.

From the time that the van was delivered to me at the dealership it has failed to conform. Due to non-conformity use has been substantially impaired to where the vehicle can only be operated safely at speeds of less than 45 mph. Due to "sway" the towing feature has been totally impaired.

On the first attempt at repair your technicians confirmed "sway" but made no adjustments. The second attempt at repair occurred when you test drove the vehicle with your shop foreman and confirmed the existence of "sway". You test drove another 2011 E-150 off your lot and confirmed experiencing the same type of sway. The third attempt to diagnose and repair occurred with your shop foreman and the Ford engineer Mr. James Michnya out of Cincinnati. The engineer confirmed sway, was confounded and suggested adjustments outlined for 2010 models as stated in NHTSA reference #10032624. A guess to follow a 2010 Service Bulletin is not adequate to address safety concerns. The fourth attempt at repair was after adjustments were made to the steering gear mesh box and tire alignment which did not eliminate "sway". The fifth attempt at repair occurred when I dropped off the van on August 1. Due to safety concerns the van has not been operated or has been at Downtown Ford, for the most part, between July 5 and August 3, which is about one month.

August 4, 2011
Virginia

I look forward to your reply to my fax of August 3 and any comments you would like to make concerning this fax communication. Feel free to call if you choose or you can fax me at [redacted] As always thanks for your time and consideration.

[redacted]

Louisville KY [redacted]

safercar.gov

Complaints - Search Results

2 Record(s) Displayed.

Report Date : June 20, 2011 at *10:18 PM*
Search Type : VEHICLE
Year : 2010
Make : FORD
Model : E-150

Make : FORD **Model :** E-150 **Year :** 2010

Manufacturer : FORD MOTOR COMPANY

Crash : No **Fire :** No **Number of Injuries:** 0

ODI ID Number : 10375895 **Number of Deaths:** 0

Date of Failure: May 4, 2010

VIN : Not Available

Component: STEERING

Summary:

12/1/2010 EXPLANATION OF TWO LIFE THREATENING SITUATIONS SITUATION ONE: ON MAY 4, 2010, I THE CONSUMER, WAS DRIVING FROM JOHNS CREEK, GEORGIA TO CHATTANOOGA, TENN. THE TRIP WAS ON GEORGIA HWY 400 SOUTH FROM OLD MILTON PKWY TO I-285 WEST AND NORTH ON I-75. THE TIME WAS BETWEEN 3:30 PM AND 5:30PM. THE VAN WAS DIFFICULT TO CONTROL AND WAS MOVING FROM THE LEFT TO THE RIGHT SIDES OF THE TRAFFIC LANE. THE TRAFFIC WAS CONSIDERED NORMAL FOR I-75 WITH 18 WHEEL TRUCK AND PASSENGER CAR TRAFFIC. THE VAN WAS DRIVEN WITH THE FLOW OF TRAFFIC APPROXIMATELY BETWEEN 65 AND 75 MPH. IN THE DALTON, GEORGIA AREA OF I-75 THE VAN WAS APPROACHING AN OVERPASS. AT THE OVERPASS THE PAVEMENT MUST HAVE CHANGED IN LEVEL BECAUSE THE VAN JUMPED IN THE AIR AND TURNED SLIGHTLY TO THE LEFT APPROACHING THE LEFT GUARD RAIL. FORTUNATELY, THE CONSUMER DRIVER WAS ABLE TO REGAIN CONTROL BEFORE HITTING THE GUARD RAIL OR THE TRUCK ON THE RIGHT. THE VAN WAS RETURNED TO CHEROKEE FORD ON MAY 5, 2010 FOR CORRECTION OF THE DIFFICULT CONTROL PROBLEM. THE PROBLEM HAS NOT BEEN REPAIRED TO DATE. SITUATION TWO: ON OCTOBER 15, 2010 I THE CONSUMER, WAS DRIVING SOUTH ON GEORGIA HWY 400 FROM OLD MILTON PKWY TO THE ABERNATHY EXIT. THE TIME WAS BETWEEN 2:30PM TO 2:45PM. TRAFFIC WAS HEAVY WITH PASSENGER CAR TRAFFIC AND THE VAN WAS TRAVELING IN THE MIDDLE LEFT LANE OF THE FOUR LANE HIGHWAY. TRAFFIC SPEED WAS NORMAL FOR GEORGIA 400 ABOUT 65 TO 75 MPH. THE VAN WAS DIFFICULT TO CONTROL AND WAS MOVING FROM THE LEFT TO THE RIGHT SIDES OF THE TRAFFIC LANE, SIMILAR WITH SITUATION ONE. FOR NO APPARENT REASON AND WITH NO CHANGE IN THE STEERING WHEEL DIRECTION THE VAN WENT LEFT INTO THE FAR LEFT LANE. I TRIED TO RETURN TO THE MIDDLE LEFT LANE, BUT THE VAN WOULD NOT RESPOND WITH A SLIGHT TURN TO THE RIGHT. AFTER SOME DISTANCE, UNKNOWN, THE VAN DID RESPOND AND RETURNED TO THE MIDDLE LEFT LANE.

Make : FORD **Model :** E-150 **Year :** 2010

Manufacturer : FORD MOTOR COMPANY

Crash : No **Fire :** No **Number of Injuries:** 0

ODI ID Number : 10375895 **Number of Deaths:** 0

Date of Failure: May 4, 2010

VIN : Not Available

Component: STEERING:WHEEL AND HANDLE BAR

Summary:

12/1/2010 EXPLANATION OF TWO LIFE THREATENING SITUATIONS SITUATION ONE: ON MAY 4, 2010, I THE CONSUMER, WAS DRIVING FROM JOHNS CREEK, GEORGIA TO CHATTANOOGA, TENN. THE TRIP WAS ON GEORGIA HWY 400 SOUTH FROM OLD MILTON PKWY TO I-285 WEST AND NORTH ON I-75. THE TIME WAS BETWEEN 3:30 PM AND 5:30PM. THE VAN WAS DIFFICULT TO CONTROL AND WAS MOVING FROM THE LEFT TO THE RIGHT SIDES OF THE TRAFFIC LANE. THE TRAFFIC WAS CONSIDERED NORMAL

HELPFUL WEBSITES ABOUT THE 2010 FORD E-150, DIFFICULT TO CON CONDITIONS

No one has added a helpful site for this 2010 E-150 problem yet. Be the first!

#1

2010
MAY 04

E-150 XLT Premium 4.8L V8

AUTOMATIC TRANSMISSION 200 MILES

Have to life threatening events on the Interstate with wind speed of 10 to 19 mph. direction for no reason. Ford can not fix and I will not drive the van on Interstate F

greenert
Johns Creek, GA, USA

SEND A COMMENT »

About CarComplaints.com

CarComplaints.com is an online automotive complaint resource that uses graphs to show automotiv defect patterns, based on complaint data submitted by visitors to the site. The complaints are organ into groups with data published by vehicle, vehicle component, and specific problem.

Follow Us Elsewhere

- CarComplaints.com on Facebook
- CarComplaints.com on Twitter
- Got an iPhone? m.carcomplaints.com

Top Links

FORD PROBLEMS

2010 FORD E-150 TSBs

7 E-150 Technical Service Bulletins

Technical Service Bulletins, or TSBs for short, are notifications made directly by Ford to help automotive technicians diagnose and repair commonly reported E-150 problems. Interested in how this information is collected? Read more about TSBs.

Recent 2010 E-150 TSBs

STEERING

- **Date Reported** APRIL 01 2010
- **NHTSA Reference** #10032624
- **TSB Reference** #TSB-09-20-7

Description: FORD: STEERING WANDER. SOME VEHICLES MAY EXHIBIT STEERING WANDE FREE PLAY. STEERING GEAR MESH LOAD ADJUSTMENT. FRONT END ALIGNMENT MAY BE ADJUSTED TO IMPROVE THE WANDER/FREE PLAY CONDITION. STICKY ON CENTER FEEL M ALSO BE DUE TO B

Repair Information for NHTSA #10032624 *(http://www.carcomplaints.com/repair_manual.shtml)*

STEERING:LINKAGES:LINK:DRAG:CONNECTION

- **Date Reported** APRIL 01 2010
- **NHTSA Reference** #10032624
- **TSB Reference** #TSB-09-20-7

Description: FORD: STEERING WANDER. SOME VEHICLES MAY EXHIBIT STEERING WANDE FREE PLAY. STEERING GEAR MESH LOAD ADJUSTMENT. FRONT END ALIGNMENT MAY BE ADJUSTED TO IMPROVE THE WANDER/FREE PLAY CONDITION. STICKY ON CENTER FEEL M ALSO BE DUE TO B

Repair Information for NHTSA #10032624 *(http://www.carcomplaints.com/repair_manual.shtml)*

Quote:

> Originally Posted by **Henry10s**
> *150's steering is busy and sloppy and you have to constantly adjust when driving. Part of it is attributed to sway, and part of the sway is attributed to soft sidewalls of the tires -- jelly feeling....*

E150

can I swap it to another model steering without bigger problems ?

and get rid of that sloppy=%# ---nes ?

I have tried 2 other E-lines but cant recall the model number , do think one was a inline six E150 , the other a Diesel cargovan could have been a E350

Sincerly
JCBX

Tires must be Load Rated E, properly inflated. New tires from PW should be E rated unless they were swapped (by dealer?). That is why I suggested to verify.

E150

PW now has a rear sway bar made in Vancouver. It can be retrofitted in older models. I will get one eventually (next year?). I think it is now standard on recent models or it maybe an option. Sway bar will reduce lateral up&down motion induced by sharp turn and road bumps/divots.

E150

A trackbar (aka Panhard rod) is very different than a sway bar (anti-roll bar). It will reduce the left-right action induced by cross-wind & close encounter with "18wheelers".

Johnny

DiscoverThis
Uniontown, OH
USA
Full Member
Joined:
06/16/2004

Posted: 06/21/11 08:27am

Link | Quote | Print | Notify Moderator

I can appreciate your frustration. We purchased a new Excel TS in 2008 and spent 3 years trying, unsuccessfully, to solve this problem. The only solution to our problem was to trade it in on a new Roadtrek. Wish I hadn't waited so long.

W

Woodalls Open Roads Forum 2011 PW Excel Steering Issue

E-150

Good Sam RV
Club Member

This, sadly, was the experience of some RV neighbors we met in AZ. I was admiring their PW Excel and then they regaled us with their bad experiences. Their issues were never resolved, either. I think theirs was either a 2007 or 2008 and they were planning to trade it, also.

A year later, though, I met a guy at a fuel station in the NV desert who was also driving a newer PW Excel who was happy with it. And he surely would have experienced wind on that leg of his journey.

Reply to Topic | Subscribe | Print Topic | Post New Topic | Oldest first

Page 1 of 3
Next

OldLadyDriver
San Luis Obispo
New Member
Joined:
06/20/2011
View Profile

Offline

Posted: 06/20/11 07:23pm

Link | Quote | Print | Notify Moderator

We stupidly purchased a 2011 Excel Pleasure Way without doing research ahead of time. In any case we have had it for six months and only driven it twice. One problem after another.
Newest issue is the steering. It is scary to drive the way it sways on the road. Old lady here is the main driver and there is no way I would let my husband drive this van.
It is at the Ford dealer now. At first they told me it was fine. Finally I got a man to go in and drive it with them and finally they admitted there was a problem. I find this vehicle undrivable and unsafe.
Does anyone have a comment on this problem and can it be solved.?

E-150

I will note that PW in Canada has always been nice and responsive when we called them, but I drive this vehicle alone and need to feel safer. Will I?

Cruisers Forum

Main Forum => General Discussion => Topic started by: jdw on March 24, 2011, 02:51:47 PM

Title: **Suspension and handling**
Post by: **jdw** on **March 24, 2011, 02:51:47 PM**

We're in our 2350 right now. The wind's up today and my wife (no I'm not driving and typing :)) is getting blown all over the road.

Based on the earlier feedback about leveling and stabilizing, I think for the time being doing some changes to the suspension would be a better overall use of money than leveling jacks.

I've read quite a bit on here about what people have done (Hi Ron!) and if I understand right there are several things to look at:

1) Shocks.
2) Stabilizer Bars (Front & Rear) AKA SWAY BAR
3) Steering Stabilizer
4) Rear trac bar

The problem I'm finding is none of these are available for the 2011 chassis. (Checked Roadmaster, Hellwig, Bilstein, etc.) Most of them seem to be available only for models up until 2008 to 2010 depending on the part.

Does anybody know where these types of parts might be available for a 2011 chassis?

Also, is a "sway bar" the same as one of the above? I'm a little out of my depth here.

Thanks!

Title: **Re: Suspension and handling**
Post by: **ron.dittmer** on **March 24, 2011, 04:42:59 PM**

Hi jdw,

A sway bar and stabilizer bar are one and the same.

BEFORE YOU BUY ANYTHING, first get a front wheel alignment, compliments of Ford. Call Ford customer service for instruction. When you go there, have a full tank of fresh water & fuel, all your gear, etc. Try to simulate the weight as if leaving on a trip. If you want to go the extra mile, add weight to simulate driver and passenger. I threw in some weights from exercise equipment, set on the floor behind the two front seats.

About your 2011 chassis not having availability, I suspect the on-line information has not yet been updated to accomodate 2011 model years. I advise to call Helwig and Roadmaster direct. They may say to simply order 2010 parts.

I also advise to have both the rear sway bar and rear trac bar installed at the same time. This because the installer will need to adjust the position of the sway bar to accomodate the trac bar. You would not want anyone to mess with sway bar mounting hardware twice.

If your budget is very limited, start first with rear sway & trac bars. That will address the worst of your handling troubles. Immediately following would be a front sway bar. If you still have issues, then do the shocks and steering stabilizer.

As you know we had everything done all at once which made a "MEGA" improvement in handling. Our rig is a real joy to drive and ride in. No more "Drunken Sailer".

Title: **Re: Suspension and handling**
Post by: **billy** on **March 24, 2011, 04:50:08 PM**

http://www.brazelsrv.com/

These are great people to deal with. Just purchased a Rear Trac-Bar and very pleased. Told them my rig was a 2011 and he check, recommended the trac-bar, I put it on and works great.

1) Shocks.
Shock absorbers are just that, as you your rig moves up and down the shocks help it from being a yoyo. Absorbs the bounce

2) Stabilizer Bars (Front & Rear)

Both front and rear are too small. After market is much larger (in diameter) helping keep your rig from side to side motion.

3) Steering Stabilizer
On the front, big & costly shock. Helps when hitting ruts, off the shoulder, quick movements of the rig. Not being a smart ass, but it's a steering stabilizer. Usually mounts on a solid part of the frame and then to the front steering suspension.

4) Rear trac bar
Also the trac-bar mounts to the rear housing and then to the frame. When a big truck passes you, you do not have that rear side-to-side movement. It does not effect the up and down movement.

I hope this helps, I know I've probably forgot something. billy

Post by: **ron.dittmer** on **March 26, 2011, 09:44:40 PM**

I will take a stab at it too.

Sway/stabilizer bars reduce side-to-side swaying. Like a pine tree would sway in a gusty wind storm. Like a boat or a buoy rocks side-to-side in water.

A rear trac bar eliminates horizontal side-to-side motion. The motion is caused from the rear leaf springs twisting. That is why on a van style class B+/C there is no need for a front trac bar because the chassis does not have front leaf springs.

I can easily create the same motion with my little Ford Ranger pickup truck by standing close to the rear tailgate, pushing on the side in quick succession, getting it to shake it's butt sideways wildly. I cannot do that with the front end because it has coil springs and the rest that goes with that type of suspension.

Title: **Re: Suspension and handling**
Post by: **mciai2000** on **March 26, 2011, 09:49:21 PM**

Ron & Billy:

It seems to me to the anti-sway bars and trac bars do the basically the same thing. Which one is the better one to start with?
DJM

Title: **Re: Suspension and handling**
Post by: **ron.dittmer** on **March 26, 2011, 10:01:48 PM**

Each addresses a different type of unwanted motion. I advise to get both right from the start. If you do just the sway bar, I understand it will have to be removed to install the trac bar, so just do both.....done once, done right.

Title: **Re: Suspension and handling**
Post by: **imichael** on **May 10, 2011, 12:07:11 AM**

After reading everyone's comments, I decided to replace the shocks and sway (anti sway for the purist) on my 2350. It took me a full day to replace the stock shocks with Bilstein HD shocks front and back only because I kept having to "find" tools I just had. Then I replaced the front and back sway bars with Hellwig anti sway bars, and that took me one day for the rear bar and a couple hours for the front bar. It was a fairly simple installation except for a couple times when I over thought what I was doing. After installing the front shocks, the test drive didn't show significant difference except for a stiffer ride. The new rear shocks made a significant difference. Then the test drive with the new rear sway bar was everything everyone has commented on in this post. The front sway bar topped off a very satisfactory installation and test drive. The difference is remarkable! We're leaving next Monday on a long trip east, and I can't wait to experince the difference on the open road. I did all the labor myself, and the total cost for these upgrades was $790.70. The best price I found for the Bilstein HD shocks was through eshocks.com for $82.55 each with no shopping cost or tax. The Hellwig front sway bar was $199.71, the rear $204.95 and shipping was $55.84 through sdtruckspring.com. All parts were received within 5 days of my order. I'll get the steering stabilizer after this trip. I'm considering lowering the front tires to 70 psi from the recommended 75 to soften the ride a little. Anybody have any thought about whether this is a good or

FAXED

November 15, 2011

FAX ONLY
589-9940

ATTN: LORI
LOUISVILLE BETTER BUSINESS BUREAU

RE: 2011 E-150 FORD CLUB VAN WAGON
VIN #1FMNE1BW1BD[redacted] WITH TOWING PACKAGE
SWAY BAR WITH TAB & LINK DESIGN
SUBJECT: BBB AUTO LINE CASE FRD 1127028 [redacted]
0428441741

Dear Lori:

It appears to me that we have a problem inadvertently created by the Autoline BBB process.

You are aware of the fact that we received permission from BBB Autoline in Virginia to submit pictures to document the existing position of the sway bar. We were likewise encouraged to have same documented by a suspension specialist prior to the test drive being conducted by the mechanic under windy conditions at 65 to 70 mph.

In attempting to document the position of the sway bar, which among other things would be necessary in the event the sway bar returned to its normal position, on Friday, November 11, we drove the truck van wagon over to Medley's Auto and Truck Alignment Service at 3913 Shepherdsville Rd., Louisville KY. We had an appointment with Emmett.

Emmett examined the position of the sway bar and admitted that there was a problem that should be repaired by Ford Motor Company. We asked Emmett for a written statement confirming that the sway bar was out of position. He refused indicating that Medley's was an independent Ford contractor and they receive a large volume of work to correct and repair truck warranty issues as they pertain to suspensions, alignments etc. We really cannot blame Medley for that response because they receive their livelihood from Ford Motor Company and rather than make an unbiased objective statement potentially cutting off their income stream, they refused to become involved. Money and not justice seems to be of most importance.

The following morning I took the 2011 van wagon truck to Bill's Auto Spring Service at 827-833 S. 15th St., Louisville KY 40210. Mr. William Weigel is the proprietor and this company has over 50 years of experience with truck suspensions. I am anticipating receiving a written report from Mr. Weigel. I traveled to his place of business not exceeding 20 mph. I simply asked him to validate the position of the sway bar consistent with ongoing communications with BBB.

November 15, 2011
Attn: Lori

After examining the vehicle, Mr. Weigel indicated the following:

- The anti-sway bar aka sway bar is stuck and jammed caused from a driver to passenger side sway bar shift.
- The sway bar is making metal to metal contact with the driver side bracket.
- Both sway bar links are angled toward the front passenger side wheel and are not in a normal position.
- The sway bar is not positioned in its correct field.
- The sway bar and links in their present position are symptomatic of a dangerous condition and should not be driven.
- The sway bar links are severely pivoted which could break resulting in the sway bar dropping down and entangling with the steering rods.
- The sway bar and sway bar links are causing control issues.
- The cargo load based on the springs is 3/4 ton instead of 1/2 ton, which is misleading to the consumer expecting a 1/2 ton capacity which always has been commensurate with an E-150.

The sway bar, as you know, has been in the forefront of this complaint. It is not my fault that the mediator failed to bend down, look under the bumper and note the compromised position of the sway bar and the sway bar links. When defective equipment is specifically referenced it has to be examined, which it was not. Now, a hazardous condition has been communicated to me and, in turn, through this communication to BBB of Louisville. When a hazardous condition exists or is suspected then it has to be disclosed to any party that potentially would come in contact with same. Not to do so is grounds for gross negligence. This error and omission has created the need for due diligence. I am sure the Louisville BBB has counsel to rely upon and any Kentucky attorney will tell you that when a potentially hazardous condition comes to light it cannot be concealed and in this situation it must be visually confirmed and acknowledged by BBB of Louisville.

As you know, we remain in the investigative stage. At the walk around inspection at the back of the church parking lot, Mr. Fox did not inspect the sway bar or the sway bar links. It is just a matter of bending over and visually you can see it all – as to how it is skewed caused by a driver to passenger side shift. It is also noticeable by viewing through the crack between the tire and fender wheel well. The sway bar equipment as indicated in the documentation and testimony has been the main point of contention.

If a consumer brings to light an issue where the vehicle has four power lock doors but only three of the power lock doors function or if a right sided product is affixed on the left side of the vehicle or if chrome is peeling off of a bumper, all of the above are facts that can be confirmed by visual observations. My van has a sway bar that is locked up in an abnormal position that resulted from a violent sway bar shift from the driver side to the passenger side. The skewed position of the sway bar was the same position the sway was in when the mediator should have bent down and visually inspected this failed piece of equipment. In

November 15, 2011
Attn: Lori

light of the fact that this was an inadvertent error and omission, nonetheless it can be corrected immediately at the direction of Louisville BBB.

In the last few days I have had two local suspension truck specialists volunteer problems and hazards which I am now obligated to communicate to anyone that comes in contact with the van or I can be held out to be grossly negligent if any information that "could" harm an individual has been concealed. This is known as due diligence and exercising a standard level of proper care and safety. If you consult with your BBB attorney in Louisville you will have his recommendation that the oversight by the mediator needs to be corrected before moving forward. At this stage, due diligence supersedes everything else and, accordingly, BBB of Louisville has an obligation to advise anyone of the perils of conducting a test when potential risks or hazards have been brought to the forefront by specialists.

This matter is in the jurisdiction of BBB of Louisville as BBB of Louisville was empowered to conduct a hearing and supervise the walk around inspection in Louisville KY by the mediator. Everything about the sway bar can be observed from the ground, as the van truck passenger Club Wagon stands high off the ground.

The BBB Autoline program operates with the blessing of the Kentucky Attorney General's Office. We know that any attorney would bring into question a procedure where a specialist brings to light hazards and then the appropriate warnings are purposely not communicated to anyone that comes in contact with the defective product. Such warnings cannot be concealed from anyone that could potentially be placed in harm's way. Further, the Kentucky Attorney General's Office supports the BBB Autoline program because it is supposed to be a fact finding procedure and not a procedure that suppresses, conceals or omits the facts.

As an owner of a vehicle, in light of the additional information that has been volunteered to me on 11/11/11 and 11/12/11 by two local well respected suspension specialists, I likewise am obligated to communicate to anyone that comes in contact with the van, of what was passed along to me; otherwise, I can be found grossly negligent for concealment. The owner, along with others in the process such as BBB of Louisville, has the responsibility to pass such warnings along.

BBB Autoline in Virginia is once removed from the procedure being conducted in Louisville KY. Further, to send a mechanic in blindly and conceal knowledge that places the mechanic at risk, which "could" harm the mechanic, is not exercising due diligence and reasonable care standards. Also, please secure copies of the photographs that were transmitted to BBB Virginia.

Proper due diligence means that I should drive the van down to BBB of Louisville to where BBB and/or the mediator can make a visual observation of the defective equipment and we can go from there. Bear in mind that we have had a total of five warnings, two from local suspension specialists that visually examined the sway bar and sway bar links on 11/11/11

November 15, 2011
Attn: Lori

and 11/12/11 and three out-of-state suspension specialists being Hellwig, Roadmaster and Performance Suspension Technologies (PST) that have stated (previously documented) that the van should not be driven until the problems are corrected.

I can have the van down at BBB at a moment's notice. Just provide me with a time and date.

After the sway bar and sway bar links are examined at BBB, it would certainly be prudent to have the mechanic that is supposed to drive the vehicle to confirm the condition and position of the sway bar. Then you will have unbiased validation from an ASE mechanic. A BBB representative can meet us at Bill's Auto Spring Service just a few blocks away from the BBB Louisville office.

Thank you very much.

[redacted]
Louisville KY [redacted]