



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**National Highway
Traffic Safety
Administration**

1200 New Jersey Avenue SE.
Washington, DC 20590

July 25, 2011

[REDACTED]
Painesville, OH [REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

NVS-216 mec
Ref. No. 10414291

Thank you for your correspondence concerning your model year (MY) 2001 Ford F-150 truck. Your correspondence was received by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) Office of Defects Investigations.

NHTSA is the Federal agency responsible for improving safety on our Nation's highways. We are authorized to order manufacturers to recall and repair vehicles or motor vehicle equipment when our investigations indicate that they contain safety defects in their design, construction, or performance. In order for the agency to initiate an investigation, we look carefully at the body of consumer complaints and other available data to determine whether a defect may exist. However, we cannot act on isolated problems or resolve disputes between individual owners, dealers, or manufacturers.

We appreciate the report you provided. Reports from motorists are a very important source of information for us. In your correspondence, you indicated that the fuel tank straps in your MY 2001 Ford F-150 truck deteriorated causing the fuel tank to fall to the ground.

As you know, on September 7, 2010, NHTSA opened preliminary evaluation No. 10-036, into reports alleging that the straps holding up the fuel tank can corrode or break in certain MY 1997 through MY 2001 Ford F150 trucks. On May 4, ODI upgraded that investigation to an engineering analysis No. 11-006, which is a more detailed and complete technical analysis of the character and scope of an alleged defect. This investigation is continuing and no determinations have been made at this time. For your information, we have enclosed a copy of the opening resume for engineering analysis No. 11-006 and a brochure explaining the investigation process that can also be found on our web site at www-odi.nhtsa.dot.gov/recalls/recallprocess.cfm.



We sympathize with you concerning your request for reimbursement; however, this type of request does not fall under our jurisdiction. NHTSA cannot assist vehicle owners in obtaining reimbursements. We can only recommend you continue to work with Ford regarding your request.

Should you encounter a safety-related problem with a motor vehicle or motor vehicle equipment in the future, you can complete an electronic Vehicle Owner's Questionnaire online at <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/ivoq>. Also, a summary listing of vehicle owners' complaints, safety recalls, manufacturers' service bulletins, etc., can be obtained at <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/cars/problems>.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Randy Reid".

Randy Reid, Chief
Correspondence Research Division
Office of Defects Investigation
Enforcement

Enclosure



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ODI RESUME

OFFICE OF DEFECTS INVESTIGATION

NHTSA

Authentic US Government Information
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uses a digital certificate to ensure
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Investigation: EA 11-006
Prompted by: Consumer complaints, PE10-036
Date Opened: 05/04/2011
Investigator: Lawrence Hershman **Reviewer:** Scott Yon
Approver: Frank Borris
Subject: Fuel Tank Strap Corrosion/Rust

MANUFACTURER & PRODUCT INFORMATION

Manufacturer: FORD MOTOR COMPANY
Products: 1997-2001 Ford F-150
Population: 2,731,909

Problem Description: The straps that support the fuel tank can rust and break, possibly dropping the tank and causing a fuel leak. Leaking gasoline presents a fire hazard.

FAILURE REPORT SUMMARY

	ODI	Manufacturer	Total
Complaints:	175	156	306**
Crashes/Fires:	1	1	2
Injury Incidents:	0	0	0
Fatality Incidents:	0	0	0
Other*:	0	8	8

*Description of Other: Goodwill warranty claims involving fuel strap failure due to corrosion.

** Count indicates duplicate reports received by ODI and manufacturer.

ACTION / SUMMARY INFORMATION

Action: Close Preliminary Evaluation PE10-036 and upgrade investigation to an Engineering Analysis.

Summary:

One or both of the steel straps holding up the fuel tank and attaching it to the truck frame can corrode and break. If one strap breaks, the tank may tilt and drop and possibly contact the road surface. If both straps break, the entire tank may drop to the road. If either failure occurs while the vehicle is being driven, contact with the road can abrade the tank and create a hole from which gasoline can spill. When the tank drops, it remains attached to the vehicle only by the fuel filler hose and/or supply lines, or in rare instances, by the skid plate, if present. This raises the possibility that the weight of the dropped tank could sufficiently strain the hoses and fittings to cause separation and fuel leaks between those components. The fire hazard created by the leaking gasoline is increased by the possible presence of sparks created by the metal tank being dragged along the road. The sparks could ignite the escaped fuel.

ODI has included in its incident counts reports it has received from consumers and reports provided by Ford in which either the complaint involved confirmed strap corrosion or ODI's investigation yielded information that strongly suggests the subject defect as the cause of the reported problem. Among the incidents reported to NHTSA or Ford, 243 involved the fuel tank dropping below the vehicle and/or dragging on the ground, 95 involved fuel leakage, and nine included reports of sparks from the tank being dragged on the road. ODI has received one report of strap failure in which the leaking fuel ignited but self-extinguished. Ford reported another incident in which the leaking fuel ignited and the resultant fire destroyed the vehicle. There have been no injuries associated with these incidents.

ODI has received reports of corrosion induced tank strap failures with other model year F-150 vehicles. ODI is upgrading this investigation to further investigate the frequency, severity and scope of this problem.