



U.S. Department
of Transportation

**National Highway
Traffic Safety
Administration**

February 24, 2014

1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

[REDACTED]
Austin, TX [REDACTED]

NVS-216 am
Ref. No. 10532496

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your correspondence concerning your model year (MY) 2003 Ford Explorer. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) Office of Defects Investigation received your correspondence. We regret any inconvenience our delay in responding may have caused you.

NHTSA is the Federal agency responsible for improving safety on our Nation's highways. We are authorized to order manufacturers to recall and repair motor vehicles or motor vehicle equipment when our investigations indicate that they contain safety defects in their design, construction, or performance. We also monitor the adequacy of manufacturers' recall campaigns. 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 trend may exist. We do not have authority to act on isolated problems or resolve disputes between individual owners, dealers, or manufacturers.

You indicate that you took your MY 2003 Ford Explorer to two local dealers to repair a rear differential humming/whining noise and fluid leak. After seven repair attempts by the dealers which included replacement of the ring and pinion, bearings, rear brakes, axle hosing, and seals the problem still remains unresolved. In addition, the hatch is cracked and the vehicle overheated due to the thermostat housing becoming damaged. You are not satisfied with the quality of dealers' repairs and request assistance in resolving this problem.

We have reviewed our database in an effort to identify whether a safety defect trend exists with regard to the rear differential, hatch, and thermostat housing in MY 2003 Ford Explorer vehicles. At this time, there is insufficient evidence to warrant opening a safety defect investigation. The information you provided has been entered into our database. It will be considered with future reports to identify any safety defect trends that may require our attention. The NHTSA investigation and recall process is on our web site at www-odi.nhtsa.dot.gov/recalls/recallprocess.cfm.

NHTSA is aware of a Ford technical service bulletin (TSB) that may be of interest to you. TSB No. 05-23-3 (copy enclosed) concerns rear axle noise in certain MY 2002 through MY 2005 Ford Explorer vehicles. Please note that the issuance of a TSB does not necessarily reflect the existence of a safety-related defect in accordance with the National Traffic and Motor Vehicle

Safety Act. Therefore, NHTSA cannot require Ford to perform the corrective action described in the TSB on your vehicle at no cost to you. We recommend that you continue to work with Ford and a local dealer and verify if the TSB procedure was performed on your vehicle during a subsequent repair to correct the problem.

We understand your frustration with the dealer's inability to repair the rear differential to your satisfaction and their lack of customer service; however, this does not fall under our jurisdiction. If you have not done so, you may consider contacting your local Consumer Protection Agency or the Texas Office of the Attorney General regarding your problem and rights under the State law. You may also ask your dealership for a meeting with a Ford district manager regarding your problem. In addition, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has jurisdiction over non-safety defects, paint, fraud or deception, warranty and dealership problems, remuneration matters, and fair trade practices. There are three ways to contact the FTC: by toll free telephone at 1-877-FTC-HELP (1-877-382-4357); by mail at Federal Trade Commission, CRC-240, Washington, DC 20580; and by using the Internet complaint form at www.ftccomplaintassistant.gov.

You also may consider contacting Better Business Bureau (BBB) Auto Line. The BBB offers free mediation/arbitration to resolve warranty disputes under guidelines established by the FTC. Remedies include repair, reimbursement, repurchase or replacement, depending on program eligibility. You can visit their web site at www.bbb.org to file a complaint and review eligibility information, or call the BBB Auto Line at 1-800-955-5100.

Should you encounter a safety-related problem with a motor vehicle or motor vehicle equipment in the future, we would appreciate it if you would complete an electronic Vehicle Owner's Questionnaire online at www.nhtsa.gov or call the Auto Safety Hotline at 1-888-327-4236. Also, a summary listing of vehicle owners' complaints, safety recalls, manufacturers' service bulletins, etc. can be obtained at our web site.

Sincerely,



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

Enclosure

2003 Ford Truck Explorer 4WD V6-4.0L VIN E

Vehicle » Technical Service Bulletins » All Technical Service Bulletins » Drivetrain - Rear Differential
Whine/Hum Noise

TSB 05-23-3

11/28/05

REAR AXLE NOISE REPAIR

FORD:

1997-2005 Expedition, F-150

2002-2005 Explorer

LINCOLN:

1998-2005 Navigator

2003-2005 Aviator

MERCURY:

2002-2005 Mountaineer

This article supersedes TSB 05-12-6 to update the Service Kit and Service Procedure information.

ISSUE

Some vehicles may exhibit an axle whine or hum during acceleration, deceleration and/or cruise.

ACTION

An axle repair kit has been developed which incorporates most parts required for a comprehensive axle repair. The kit should be used instead of installing a complete axle assembly to repair an axle whine/hum. Replace Ring and Pinion with Axle Kit and Components.

NOTE REFER TO THE "DIFFERENTIAL RING AND PINION" IN-VEHICLE REPAIR PROCEDURE IN THE ONLINE WORKSHOP MANUAL SECTION 205-00, FOR THE LATEST AXLE DIAGNOSIS AND REPAIR PROCEDURES.

NOTE FOR 1999 AND PRIOR MODEL YEAR VEHICLES, USE THE 2000 MODEL YEAR WORKSHOP MANUAL.

NOTE WHEN SERVICING THE REAR AXLE ON ANY 2002-2004 F-150, EXPEDITION, NAVIGATOR, EXPLORER OR MOUNTAINEER BUILT BEFORE 3/30/2004, IF FLUID REPLACEMENT IS REQUIRED, REPLACE THE ORIGINAL FUEL EFFICIENT HIGH PERFORMANCE (FEHP) SAE 75W-90 REAR AXLE LUBRICANT WITH SAE 75W-140 HIGH PERFORMANCE SYNTHETIC REAR AXLE LUBRICANT. WHEN THE FLUID TYPE IS CHANGED, REPLACE THE CURRENT "FEHP" METAL TAG WITH A NEW "75W-140" TAG (F3TZ-4121-AA). IN ADDITION, REMOVE OR BLOCK-OUT THE FEHP REFERENCE ON THE MULTI-COLORED LABEL LOCATED ON THE RIGHT SIDE AXLE TUBE. IF THE AXLE IS A LIMITED-SLIP MODEL, USE XL3 ADDITIVE FRICTION MODIFIER IN THE QUANTITY RECOMMENDED BY THE WORKSHOP MANUAL.

KIT ORDERING: REFER TO THE VEHICLE AXLE
TAG FOR AXLE RATIO IDENTIFICATION

^ 5L3Z-4209-A = (8.8-Inch Ring Gear/3.31 ratio) (1997-2005 F-150)

^ 5L3Z-4209-B = (8.8-Inch Ring Gear/3.55 ratio) (1997-2005 F-150, 2002-2005
Explorer/Mountaineer/Aviator)

^ 5L3Z-4209-C = (8.8-Inch Ring Gear/3.73 ratio)(1997-2005 F-150, 2002-2005
Explorer/Mountaineer/Aviator, 2003-2004
Expedition/Navigator)

^ 5L3Z-4209-D = (9.75-Inch Ring Gear/3.31 ratio)(1997-2005 F-150, 2005 Expedition/Navigator, 1997-2002
Expedition/Navigator)

^ 5L3Z-4209-E = (9.75-Inch Ring Gear/3.55 ratio) (1997-2005 F-150, 1997-2002 Expedition/Navigator)

^ 5L3Z-4209-F = (9.75-Inch Ring Gear/3.73 ratio) (1997-2005 F-150, 1997-2005
Expedition/Navigator)

NOTE 9.75 REAR AXLE HOUSINGS WERE REDESIGNED IN MID-1999, INCREASING FRONT PINION BEARING SIZE. REPLACING RING & PINIONS IN AN OLD-STYLE AXLE ASSEMBLY WILL REQUIRE INSTALLATION OF SPACER P/N YL3Z4662-CA. SPACER IS TO BE INSTALLED BETWEEN INNER PINION BEARING AND COLLAPSIBLE SPACER.

THE AXLE SERVICE KITS INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING COMPONENTS:

^ 4630 - Head Bearing

^ 4628 - Head Bearing Cup

^ 4676 - Pinion Seal

^ 386989-S2 - Washer (Slinger)

^ 4621 - Tail Bearing

^ 4616 - Tail Bearing Cup

^ 4222 - Differential Bearing Cups

^ 4221 - Differential Bearings

^ 4209 - Gear Set (includes pinion shims, pinion nut and crush spacer)

^ 4209 - Instruction Sheet

NOTE THE KIT DOES NOT INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING ITEMS. SOME OR ALL OF THESE ITEMS WILL BE REQUIRED TO COMPLETE THE AXLE SERVICE, DEPENDING ON AXLE APPLICATION/STYLE.

ORDER AS NEEDED:

NOTE REUSE OF RING GEAR BOLTS, CARRIER BEARING CAP BOLTS AND DIFFERENTIAL SLAVE PIN RETAINING BOLT REQUIRES CLEANING OF THREADS AND INSTALLATION OF TA-27 STUD AND BEARING MOUNT RETAINING COMPOUND & SEALANT.

^YL3Z-4662-CA - Pinion Bearing Spacer for 1997-1998 9.75 axles

^XG-14 - Gear Marking Compound

^4067 - Differential Shims 0.241" to 0.307"

^SAE XY-75W140-QL - High Performance Synthetic Rear Axle Lubricant

^XL-3 - Additive Friction Modifier (Limited Slip Axles Only)

^205-506 - Seal Protectors (Rotunda Tool)

^W710084-5439 - Wheel End Nuts

^390266-S199 - Differential Slave Pin Bolt (9.75" axles)

^387426-S100 - Differential Slave Pin Bolt (8.8" axles)

^4B422 - Axle Circlips

^ZC-21 - Metal Surface Cleaner

^TA-29 - Ultra Silicone Sealant

^TA-27 - Stud and Bearing Mount Retaining Compound and Sealer

^F3TZ-4121-AA - Fluid Tag (REQUIRED IF FLUID TYPE IS CHANGED FROM FEHP DURING REPAIR)

WARRANTY STATUS: Eligible Under Provisions Of New Vehicle Limited Warranty Coverage

OPERATION	DESCRIPTION	TIME
052303A	1997-2002 Expedition, 1998-2002 Navigator, 1997-2004 F-150 Heritage, 2004-2005 F-150: Rear Axle Noise Repair (Includes Time For Road Test To Verify Concern (Beam Axle)) (Do Not Use With 4205A Or 4205A4)	4.7 Hrs.

052303A 2003-2005 Expedition: 5.8 Hrs.
Rear Axle Noise Repair
(Includes Time For Road
Test To Verify Concern (lrs
Axle)) (Do Not Use With
4010D Or 4010D4)

052303A 2003-2005 5.9 Hrs.
Expedition/Navigator With
Air Suspension: Rear Axle
Noise Repair (Includes
Time For Road Test To
Verify Concern (lrs Axle))
(Do Not Use With 4010D
Or 4010D4)

052303A 2002-2005 6.6 Hrs.
Explorer/Mountaineer,
2003-2005 Aviator: Rear
Axle Noise Repair
(Includes Time For Road
Test To Verify Concern (lrs
Axle)) (Do Not Use With
4010D Or 4010D4)

DEALER CODING CONDITION

BASIC PART NO. CODE

4209 14

OASIS CODES: 509000, 590000, 597997, 702000, 702200, 703200, 703300, 703400, 790000

NOTE: The information in Technical Service Bulletins is intended for use by trained, professional technicians with the knowledge, tools, and equipment to do the job properly and safely. It informs these technicians of conditions that may occur on some vehicles, or provides information that could assist in proper vehicle service. The procedures should not be performed by "do-it-yourselfers". Do not assume that a condition described affects your car or truck. Contact a Ford, Lincoln, or Mercury dealership to determine whether the Bulletin applies to your vehicle.

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