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National Highway Transportation Safety Administration

To Whom it May Concern,

I want to share a safety issue I experienced with my 2003 Ford Escape that was under recall. I don't know if Ford handled this recall appropriately as per the guidelines of the NHTSA, but even if Ford did, I'm sure you would be upset if this same incident happened to one of your family members. In the future, I feel recalls should encourage companies to fix the underlying problem instead of just putting a bandaid on it.

In May of 2014 I received Safety Recall Notice 14S02/NHTSA Recall 14V-165 from Ford Motor Company for my 2003 Escape. The recall involved a corrosion-related separation of the forward attachment of the lower control arm from the subframe that could occur when vehicles are operated for an extended period in high corrosion environments like mine in Ohio. The recall authorized for dealerships to install a reinforcement crossbrace on the subframe so that steering control could be maintained in the event of a separation of the lower control arm forward attachment. I immediately took my Escape to my local Ford dealership and after ordering the part they installed it on July 31, 2014.

Less than 6 months later in January 2015 my wife was driving our Ford Escape when she heard a terrible noise and steering became practically impossible. She was near a Monroe Brake, Tire and Service store and pulled into their lot after hours. I met her at the shop and during my amateur inspection could see that part of the frame on the passenger side was completely rusted through and broken in half. The next day the mechanic at Monroe called and said he inspected the vehicle and the front cross member was rusted out and broken on the passenger side and the car was unsafe to drive until repaired. I said that I remembered there might be a recall related to this and the mechanic suggested I call my Ford dealership because it may be covered and if so recommended I have the vehicle towed to the Ford dealership.

I took his advice and called the Ford dealership and after explaining what happened was told that there was no recall for this particular mishap and essentially I was on my own. I then decided to forego the cost of towing the vehicle to the Ford dealership and had Monroe fix the problem for \$1118.09.

A few weeks later I was able to locate my original rebate notice. I read the section where it stated you may be eligible for previously paid repairs. I called the number on the letter to verify eligibility for a refund. I spoke with a pleasant customer service gentleman who assigned me a case # [REDACTED]. He then referred me to the Ford Customer Relationship Center where I spoke with a nice woman. She explained that if the lower control arm separated from the subframe

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and I had it repaired before I had the recall crossbrace installed then I was eligible to get reimbursed. She went on to say if I hadn't taken the car in to get the recall crossbrace installed and the lower control arm separated from the subframe, then I was still eligible to get reimbursed. Unfortunately, since I went to the Ford dealership and had the recall crossbrace installed and then the lower control arm separated from the subframe in my vehicle, she said I was not eligible for consideration of reimbursement.

This explanation really makes no sense to me. I took my Escape to the Ford dealership expecting that if they saw the lower control arm and subframe were suspect due to increased corrosion they would have warned me and recommended replacing the part at that time. I didn't realize they were only concerned about installing a crossbrace so that if the lower control arm separated from the subframe, like it did on my vehicle, there would be less of a chance that me or anyone else in the vehicle would be killed in a crash because the crossbrace would keep the front end of the car from totally falling apart. Most of the corrosion on my vehicle must have already been evident to the Ford dealership in July if the lower control arm and the subframe totally separated less than 6 months later. So the message that I gathered from this is that I was penalized for adhering to the recall and getting the crossbrace placed because the recall had no intention of fixing the real problem Ford knew existed in the first place. So getting the recall crossbrace placed essentially gives Ford an out from having to replace the defective part and reduces the chance that the people in the vehicle will get injured or die in a crash which could result in a lawsuit when the part finally gives out like ours.

My father worked his entire life at Ford Motor Company and as such our whole family only drives Ford vehicles. I have never owned anything but a Ford vehicle my entire adult life and to this point had no reason to question my loyalty. My issue here isn't the cost of the repair as much as it is the fact that Ford knew they had a potential safety issue and that if the lower control arm separated from the subframe, as it did in our case, this could put me and my loved ones at risk. The Ford dealership installed a crossbrace ignoring the fact that there must have been substantial preexisting corrosion to the lower control arm and subframe such that it completely failed less than 6 months later. Ford knew there was a serious problem with the subframe corroding but instead of fixing the subframe they chose to put a bandaid on it and put their customers at increased risk. The recall essentially rewards people who ignore it and if they survive the subframe breaking like mine without having had the crossbrace installed, then they have a better chance of getting a refund to fix the defect.

As you can imagine, my confidence in vehicle recalls has been shaken substantially. Before this incident, I never even gave it a second thought that Ford Motor Company might put customer safety in jeopardy in lieu of saving money and fixing a problem that obviously existed in my vehicle. I would have appreciated it more if Ford would have just been upfront with me and advised me to get the subframe inspected at the Ford dealership and recommended at my cost to have it

replaced because it could be dangerous instead of just slapping a crossbrace on the vehicle and letting me drive out of the dealership confident the problem was solved and essentially relieving Ford of any responsibility.

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