Form Approved: O.M.B. No. 2127-0008

U.S. Department of Transportation

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

DOT Auto Safety Hotline
Vehicle Owner's Questionnaire

TO REPORT VEHICLE SAFETY DEFECTS
1-888-DASH-2-DOT
(1-888-327-4236)
INTERNET: www.nhtsa.dot.gov/hotline

FOR AGENCY USE ONLY

Date Received: RECEIVED QC'd 00 SEP -1 AM 9:57 OFFICE OF DEFECTS INVESTIGATION

Qd_or ___ ___
___ ___
od_ltr ___
up_ltr ___
Copied

Reference No. 554248

DOCKETED

OWNER INFORMATION (Type or Print)

Name [redacted]

Street [redacted]

City [redacted]

Daytime Telephone Number [redacted]

Do you authorize NHTSA to provide a copy of this report to the manufacturer of your vehicle? ☑ YES ☐ NO
In the absence of an authorization, NHTSA WILL NOT provide your name or address to the vehicle manufacturer.

Signature of Owner [redacted] Date 8/25/00

PRODUCT INFORMATION

Vehicle Identification No. (V.I.N.) (17 Digits) *(Located at bottom of windshield on driver's side)*	Make	Model	Year
1FMDU32PXVUA19944	FORD	EXPLORER XLT	1997

Purchased Date: 11-16-96 ☐ New ☐ Used

Dealer's Name: GALPIN FORD

Dealer's City: NORTH HILLS State: CA Zip Code: 91343

Engine Size (CID/CC): 5.0 No. Cylinders: 8 ☐ Turbo ☐ Diesel ☑ Gas ☐ Fuel Injection

Manufacture Date (on driver's door or pillar): UNKNOWN

Transmission Type: ☐ Manual ☑ Automatic

Restraint System: ☑ Driverside Air Bag ☐ Multibelt ☑ Passengerside Air Bag ☐ 2-Point Belt ☑ 3-Point Belt

Cruise Control: ☑ Yes ☐ No

Drivetrain: ☐ Front ☑ Rear ☐ 4-Wheel

Vehicle Type: ☐ Car ☑ Sport Utility ☐ Van ☐ Truck ☐ Minivan ☐ Motorcycle ☐ Other

Body Style: ☐ 2-Door ☑ 4-Door ☐ Stationwagon ☐ Pick Up Truck ☐ Other

FAILED COMPONENT(S)/PART(S) INFORMATION

Part Name(s): TIRE - RIGHT REAR

Location: ☐ Left ☑ Right ☐ Front ☑ Rear

Failed Part(s): ☑ Original ☐ Replacement

Handicap Adaptive Equip: ☐ Yes ☑ No

TO BE COMPLETED WHEN REPORTING A TIRE FAILURE

Tire Brand: FIRESTONE Tire Name: RADIAL ATX Complete Tire Size: P235/75/15

No. of Failures: 1

Date(s) of Failure(s): 9-18-1999
Mileage at Failure(s): 35,000
Vehicle Speed at Failure(s): 65-70 MPH

Failed Part(s) Available? ☐ Yes ☐ No

NHTSA Previously Contacted? ☑ Yes ☐ No PHONE CALL

APPLICABLE INCIDENT INFORMATION

(Please describe in detail the Incident(s), Failure(s), Crash(es), and Injury(ies). Attach photos if available.)

Crash	Fire	Number of Persons Injured	Number of Fatalities	Reported to Manufacturer
☐ Yes ☑ No	☐ Yes ☑ No	POSSIBLY	Ø	☑ Yes ☐ No

Narrative Description of Incident(s), Failure(s), Crash(es), and Injury(ies).

SEE ATTACHED

Continue on back.

The Privacy Act of 1974 - Public Law 93-579 *This information is requested pursuant to a49 U.S.C. Chapter 301. You are under no obligation to respond to this questionnaire. Your response may be used to assist NHTSA in determining whether a manufacturer should take appropriate action to correct a safety defect. If NHTSA proceeds with administration enforcement or litigation against a manufacturer, your response, or a statistical summary thereof, may be used in support of the agency's action.*

Mail postage free or fax to 202-366-7882



We purchased our 2000 Explorer LTD from Galpin Ford on 26 Feb 2000, our fifth new vehicle from Ford in 10 years. The fourth with Firestone tires.

Our prior Explorer was a 1997 Explorer XLT. On 18 Sep 1999 the right rear Firestone Radial ATX tire (P235/75/15) threw the tread on the 210 Freeway in Glendale, California. I (Richard Kratz) was driving and my eight-month pregnant wife, Shawn, and our 3-year-old daughter were in the car with me.

It was a hot Saturday and the 210 Freeway moves freely. We were doing the limit (65-70 mph) and after a 30-minute drive the right rear tire just went. First I heard a thumping sound (the tread beating on the tire well) and then the vehicle's rear kicked hard to the right.

Luckily, I am a former stock car racer and motorcycle racer and knew how to respond. I let off the accelerator while counter-steering (the Explorer was seriously sideways, but my days of circle track racing made it second nature to catch the slide) and did not apply the brakes. Of course the vehicle kept swinging from side to side as we slowed, but I was able to steer the fishtailing truck to the shoulder. The incident SEVERELY shook up my wife. She thinks that if she had been driving instead of me, the vehicle would have rolled over.

The AAA came and installed the spare. But, upon returning home to Santa Clarita I smelled burning brakes. I discovered that the left rear brake caliper was locked up and smoking.

A Big O Tire store inspected the ruined brake and told me that some debris had jammed the caliper, preventing it from releasing after being applied. I realized that this debris must have come from the destroyed tire. I had the rear brakes rebuilt at a cost of $304.03 (including a new rotor).

Secondary to this accident, four days later an ultra-sound revealed a problem with my wife's pregnancy. An emergency c-section was performed on September 22nd, 1999 and my son delivered a month early. He spent 13 days in the Neo-Natal Intensive Care Unit at Huntington Memorial Hospital in Pasadena, unable to breathe on his own. One doctor told me that stress or "a shock to the system" could cause a spontaneous miscarriage or the placenta to shut down (as happened to my wife). Luckily, my son survived, but hospital bills exceeded $100,000. So was there an injury? Perhaps.

I am also a former aircraft mechanic as well as having more than 15 years of racing experience. I have an air compressor at home, two liquid-filled dial air gauges and I check the air pressures on all of our vehicles at least weekly. I kept the Explorer tires at 32 pounds front, 30 pounds rear.

While at Big O Tires, I remembered that I had had a Camero back in the 1970's that was damaged when a Firestone tire disintegrated on me. This tire was also the subject of a recall later (1978?). So I decided to replace the tires on the 1997 Explorer with reliable Pirelli tires as I could not trust Firestone anymore.