

Texas Department of Transportation

DEWITT C. GREER STATE HIGHWAY BLDG. • 125 E. 11TH STREET • AUSTIN, TEXAS 78701-2483 • (512) 463-8585

June 4, 2002

ADD TO
"566012" ↓

COPIED

EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT
JUN 10 4:17 PM '02

[REDACTED]
Katy, Texas

Dear [REDACTED]

Executive Director [REDACTED] and I received your letter about the Ford Focus airbag system and asked me to respond on his behalf. We were sorry to learn of your daughter's injury and hope she has fully recovered from her burn.

In your letter you said you believe the propellant used to deploy the airbag caused the fire. You also said consumers have the right to know if these airbags are defective and asked if the Texas Department of Transportation would be interested in conducting an investigation. Although we share your concern for motorist safety, TxDOT has no authority to conduct an investigation into this matter.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) tracks incidents like this and has the authority to require a manufacturer to recall a vehicle. Consumers can also contact NHTSA to find out about specific problems with motor vehicles. You can call the NHTSA Auto Safety Hotline at (800) 424-9393 to report this incident, and you can write to them at 400 7th Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20590.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Deputy Executive Director

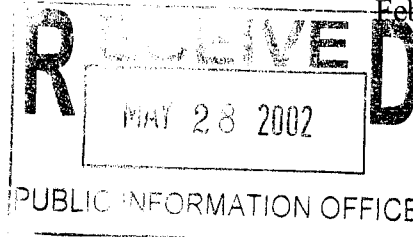
cc:

[REDACTED] P.E., Executive Director, TxDOT
[REDACTED] Administrator, NHTSA

ENTERED
5/28/02 KL

February 21, 2002

Texas Department of Transportation
125 E. 11th Street
Austin, TX 78701-2483



RECEIVED

MAY 24 2002

OFFICE/EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Attention: [REDACTED]
Executive Director

[REDACTED]

On October 9, 2001, my daughter was involved in a single car, front-end collision while driving a 2001 Ford Focus. The driver side airbag deployed as expected, however, something in the process caught the sleeve of my daughters' jacket on fire. Before she could put out the flames, it had burned completely through the sleeve extending from her wrist to her elbow, and she received a severe burn approximately 2" x 8" wide. There is no other evidence of fire or smoke damage within the car, however, there was an area the size of the hole in the jacket where the material had melted to the airbag. I believe the propellant used to deploy the airbag caused the fire.

We initially contacted Ford within days after the accident. We made it clear that we are not seeking any compensation, but just wanted to make the appropriate parties aware of what had happened thinking they might wish to investigate further. Apparently that was a naive assumption on our part. We have, of course, been stalled at every turn. The Ford Legal Analyst for Southwest Region Product Liability contacted me, and after reviewing the details concerning our claim, informed us that since the accident was not caused by a product malfunction directly, she would be unable to further process the request in her department. She indicated that the information would be forwarded to the General Counsel, and they in turn would be mailing some type of information to us that day. She also stated that although this type of occurrence was rare, the air bags do deploy at temperatures of 500 degrees Fahrenheit.

We have since tried on numerous occasions to speak to someone at Ford concerning the problem, but have had no success in getting past the customer service representatives. I have yet to be contacted by anyone, nor do I expect to. In our most recent phone call to the customer service department just last week, we were informed that our file has been closed, and that they are unable to access the information.

We are not seeking any type of compensation, but simply desire prompt and honest answers to our questions. I realize that Ford Motor Company is a large organization, and one that has recently been staggered by several lawsuits, but I truly believe this is a time when the company should be most concerned with addressing issues of this type in a straightforward manner, and not hiding behind a system of voice mail and customer service representatives. Everyone I have dealt with since the accident has

been anything but forthright, and treated both my wife and I in a most arrogant and patronizing manner.

I strongly believe the consumer has a right to know if there is a defect with the airbags that need to be corrected in this particular model. I would be extremely interested to know if this type of problem has been reported before, or if this was just a "one in a million" occurrence.

Our concern with this whole matter is not one of compensation, or even one of responsibility, but rather to ensure that this same thing does not happen to someone else's child, with even more devastating results. If there is an inherent problem with the airbag system within the Ford Focus, it needs to be addressed, and corrected, regardless of the cost. The price of not doing so is much more costly. If your organization has any desire to investigate this further, please do not hesitate to contact either of us.

Sincerely,

Katy, TX

Home phone

Work phone