



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

Auto Safety Hotline

Vehicle Owner's Questionnaire

NATIONWIDE 1-800-424-9393
DC METRO AREA (202) 366-0123
INTERNET: <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov>

FOR AGENCY USE ONLY 758

Date Received

31-JAN-2001

Od_or _____
R_dt _____
Pd_rt _____
Ip_ltr _____

Reference No.

879491

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

Signature of Owner _____ Date ____/____/____

VEHICLE INFORMATION

Vehicle Ident. No. (VIN) <small>(Located at bottom of dashboard on driver's side)</small>	Vehicle Make	Vehicle Model	Vehicle Year	Current Odometer Reading		
3MELM6534SM609792	MERCURY	MYSTIQUE	1995			
Purchase Date <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New <input type="checkbox"/> Used	Dealer's Name _____ City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____	Engine Size (CID/CCL) _____ No. Cylinders _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Turbo <input type="checkbox"/> Diesel <input type="checkbox"/> Gas <input type="checkbox"/> Fuel Injection			
Transmission Type <input type="checkbox"/> Manual <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Automatic	Antilock Brakes <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	Restraint System <input type="checkbox"/> 3-Point Belt <input type="checkbox"/> Motorbelt <input type="checkbox"/> Driverside Airbag <input type="checkbox"/> 2-Point Belt <input type="checkbox"/> Passengerside Airbag	Cruise Control <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Drive Train <input type="checkbox"/> Front <input type="checkbox"/> Rear <input type="checkbox"/> 4-Wheel	Vehicle Type <input type="checkbox"/> Car <input type="checkbox"/> Sport Util Truck <input type="checkbox"/> Van <input type="checkbox"/> Motorcycle <input type="checkbox"/> Minivan <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____	Body Style <input type="checkbox"/> 2-Door <input type="checkbox"/> 4-Door <input type="checkbox"/> Stationwagon <input type="checkbox"/> Pick Up Truck <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____

FAILED COMPONENT(S)/PART(S) INFORMATION

Component 05451000	Part Name(s) ENGINE:TIMING GEAR AND CHAIN	Location <input type="checkbox"/> Left <input type="checkbox"/> Right <input type="checkbox"/> Front <input type="checkbox"/> Rear	Failed Part(s) <input type="checkbox"/> Original <input type="checkbox"/> Replacement
No. of Failures	Date(s) of Failure(s) 13-DEC-2000 Mileage at Failure(s) 110000 Vehicle Speed at Failure(s)	Failed Part(s) Available? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	NHTSA Previously Contacted? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

APPLICATION INCIDENT INFORMATION

(Please describe in detail the incident(s), failure(s), crash(es), and injury(ies) on the back of this form.)

Crash <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	Fire <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	Number of Persons Injured	Number of Fatalities	Estimated Property Damage	Reported to Police <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
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NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION OF FAILURE(S), INCIDENT(S), INJURY(IES)

WHILE DRIVING 15-20 MPH ENGINE FAILED DUE TO TIMING BELT COMING OFF. ENGINE HAD TO BE REBUILD. *AK

CONTINUE ON BACK IF NEEDED

The Privacy Act of 1974 (Public Law 93-579) This information is requested pursuant to authority vested in the National Highway Traffic Safety Act and subsequent amendments. You are under no obligation to respond to this questionnaire. Your response may be used to assist the NHTSA in determining whether a manufacturer should take appropriate action to correct a safety defect. If the NHTSA proceeds with administrative enforcement or litigation against a manufacturer, your response, or a statistical summary thereof, may be used in support of the agency's action.

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CONTINUE ON BACK IF NEEDED

SEE ATTACHED LETTER FOR A FULL EXPLANATION. THE FAILURE OCCURRED WHILE DRIVING 15-20 MPH ENGINE FAILED DUE TO TIMING BELT COMING OFF. ENGINE HAD TO BE REBUILT. OK

WHILE DRIVING 15-20 MPH ENGINE FAILED DUE TO TIMING BELT COMING OFF. ENGINE HAD TO BE REBUILT. OK

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION OF FAILURE(S), INCIDENT(S), INJURY(IES)

Crash	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Number of Persons Injured	NONE	Estimated Property Damage	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	Reported to Police	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
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(Please describe in detail the incident(s), failure(s), crash(es), and injury(ies) on the back of this form)

APPLICATION INCIDENT INFORMATION

No of Failures	1	Date(s) of Failure(s)	13-DEC-2000	Mileage at Failure(s)	110000	Vehicle Speed at Failure(s)	20 to 35 mph
Failed Part(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Available?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Contacted?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	NHTSA Previously	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Component	05151000	Part Name(s)	ENGINE;TIMING GEAR AND CHAIN	Location	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Front <input type="checkbox"/> Left <input type="checkbox"/> Right <input type="checkbox"/> Rear	Failed Part(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original <input type="checkbox"/> Replacement

FAILED COMPONENT(S)/PART(S) INFORMATION

Transmission Type	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Automatic <input type="checkbox"/> Manual	Antilock Brakes	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	Restraint System	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3-Point Belt <input type="checkbox"/> Motorbell <input type="checkbox"/> 2-Point Belt <input type="checkbox"/> Driver'side Airbag <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Passenger'side Airbag	Drive Train	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Front <input type="checkbox"/> Rear <input type="checkbox"/> 4-Wheel	Vehicle Type	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Car <input type="checkbox"/> Van <input type="checkbox"/> Minivan <input type="checkbox"/> Other	Body Style	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2-Door <input type="checkbox"/> 4-Door <input type="checkbox"/> Stationwagon <input type="checkbox"/> Pick Up Truck <input type="checkbox"/> Other
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Purchase Date	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New <input type="checkbox"/> Used	Dealer's Name	Rowe Lincoln-Mer (Lincoln Ford)	City	Huber	State	ME	Zip Code	
Engine Size	2.0	Engine Cylinders	4	Turbo	<input type="checkbox"/>	Diesel	<input type="checkbox"/>	Gas	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Vehicle Ident. No. (VIN)	3MELM65343M60979Z	Vehicle Make	MERCURY	Vehicle Model	MYSTIQUE	Vehicle Year	1996	Current Odometer Reading	112,046
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VEHICLE INFORMATION

Signature of Owner: _____ Date: 2/18/01

Do you authorize NHTSA to provide a copy of report to the manufacturer of your vehicle? YES NO

In the absence of an authorization, NHTSA WILL NOT provide your name and address to the vehicle manufacturer.

Home Number	879491	Work Number	879491
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OWNER INFORMATION (Type or Print)		879491	
U.S. Department of Transportation National Highway Traffic Safety Administration www.nhtsa.dot.gov/hodline 1-888-274-2368 NATIONWIDE 1-888-DASH-2-DOT		FOR AGENCY USE ONLY 758	
Date Received	31-JAN-2001	Reference No.	879491

January 21, 2001

Ford Motor Company
Customer Relations Center
16800 Executive Plaza Drive
P.O. Box 6248
Dearborn, MI 48121

Attention Customer Service Representative:

My wife and I purchased a Mercury Mystique back in January of 1995. We have driven this vehicle over 108,000 miles with relatively few mechanical problems. Perhaps this is due in part to the preventive maintenance performed faithfully by our Lincoln-Mercury dealer. The car is a good size for us and more or less defines the car market sector in which we are interested.

I was greatly disappointed this last December when, during an evening trip to visit a friend, the car failed on the New Hampshire Turnpike. The vehicle was taken by flatbed that night to my dealer. I was informed the next day that the timing belt tensioner failed, the belt jumped the timing gears, and my cylinder head was now ruined on this interference Z-TEC engine.

The cars I have owned prior to this were imports (Mazda, Nissan and Audi). I understand engine mechanics to a degree and have always replaced timing belts when directed by the manufacturer. I had discussed timing belt inspection/replacement with two of my service representatives last year. I was concerned since timing belt inspections are not addressed in the maintenance manual for my car. In fact, I could not find the words "timing belt" anywhere in the owners manual. They checked on the subject further and replied that I did not have to replace the belt. As it turns out, there is no inspection requirement for the timing belt or tensioner assembly.

The bottom line is that regardless of how well the vehicle's engine is maintained, the tensioner failure would not have been prevented since there is no inspection requirement. To make matters worse, the engine design does not allow for such a failure without considerable damage to the engine. Ford had placed interference engines in their Escorts in the past and had discontinued this practice during the early '90s for this reason.

So where's the lesson learned for the design teams?

A new cylinder head, complete with valves, camshafts, etc. is expensive (\$2600.00 installed in my area). My service manager worked diligently to locate and obtain a replacement cylinder head from an automobile salvage yard. His effort reduced my cost to roughly \$1,600.

I am a quality management specialist, a member of the American Society for Quality and am familiar with the QS-9000 standard used by the automotive industry. I am disappointed that the design teams would overlook or ignore the fact that a mechanical failure of this type would result in considerable loss. The event is all the more likely to occur since inspection or replacement preventive maintenance is not addressed. This is

inadequate risk assessment in an age where obtaining 200,000 miles from a gasoline engine (with regular maintenance) is common.

Now I must ask myself when this event will repeat itself. I had no warning last time and I will have no warning the next time. My replacement cylinder head will only be warranted by my dealership for a limited time. My gas mileage is down from 32 mpg to 28 mpg since the rebuild, significant enough given I place almost 20,000 highway miles on my Mystique annually (the fuel expense is mine.) However, I need to monitor the vehicle a few more months to determine if there are other causes related to this poorer performance.

I have lost my faith in the manufacturer, since I believe this event could have been easily avoided. I must drive this car for a few more years before I can consider replacing it. You would have to convince me as to why I should consider another Ford product in the future.

I have managed to calm myself in the month or so since this event took place. Nonetheless, I was quite upset at the time, especially when I consider the maintenance effort on my part regarding this car. No establishment other than a Ford or Lincoln-Mercury Dealer has ever serviced it. I have all of the maintenance records and all can be made available to you from my local dealer. In truth, I hold the design staff at Ford responsible for this and wish to seek fair compensation. I can provide you with the invoice for the amount mentioned herein.

I will let you or the customer relation group at Ford Motor Company decide whether Ford Motor Company should extend some compensation to defray this cylinder head replacement cost. You are welcome to research this further through my dealership mentioned below and decide. In any event, I look forward to your timely reply.



VIN # 3MELM6534SM609792

Dealership with maintenance records:

Norman-David Lincoln Mercury
140 Larrabee Road
Westbrook, ME 04092
207-856-6715
Service Manager: Dick Heatly

Related invoice #: FOCS116413

UPDATE: Received a call from customer service (800-392-3030) at Ford on 1-31-01. The representative, named Strickland, was polite and factual. Compensation in any amount is denied due to the age and mileage on the car. He suggested I call the National Highway Traffic and Safety Administration at 800-424-9393 to seek further assistance regarding possible recall.