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**Ford Overhead Console
SQ99-001**

- ◆ **Background:** In January of 1999, Ford submitted a service bulletin covering certain MY 1998 Windstar vehicles that may have a loose overhead console. This is caused by the overhead console load bearing bracket fracturing, allowing the console to fall. The bracket is weakened when it comes in contact with the production stamping oil used on the headliner retainer bracket.

On Jan 12, 1999, ODI opened Service Query (SQ) 99-001 to consider whether the matter should be addressed as a safety recall.

On Feb 25, 1999, ODI sent an IR to Ford.

On May 1, 1999, ODI receives Ford's response.

- ◆ **Subject Vehicles:** MY 1998 Windstar Vans with the overhead console
Ford believes the problem only occurs on vehicles built between May, 1998 through July 3, 1998 (last 1998 job). This would limit the population to around 16,000 vehicles.

ODI is focusing on all 1998 vehicles with a population of 264,372 since there are over ninety complaints on vehicles built prior to May 1998 (Ford warranty claims).
- ◆ **Population:** Approximately 264,372
- ◆ **Alleged Defect:** Detachment of the overhead console that would startle or distract the operator while the vehicle is in movement.
- ◆ **Potential Safety Risk:** The unexpected detachment of the overhead console in the forward section of the occupant compartment. A video supplied by Ford illustrates the impact of a detached console and the affect it has on the driver. The video depicts a console that struck the side of the driver and came to rest between the transmission gear shifter (column mounted) and the accelerator pedal area. This condition is repeatable and the defective component has been identified.
- ◆ **Past ODI Investigations:** PE98-046 dealt with a sunroof shade that unexpectedly detached. There was a total of 13 reports on a population of 5,361 vehicles. This investigation led to safety recall 98V-260

SQ99101FO

- ◆ **Root Cause/Contributing Factors:** Stamping oil used on the headliner mounting bracket caused the plastic clip to become brittle and break. New material was used on the clips that is impervious to the stamping oil.

◆ **Warranty Information:**

Warranty Claims

Model Year 1998 Ford Windstar Population	Number of Claims	complaints per 100k
264,372	2,146	811
15,491 (targeted by Ford)	2,146	13,853

Further Breakdown of Warranty Claims

Model Year 1998 Ford Windstar Population	Number of Claims Specifically Stating DROPPED	complaints per 100k
264,372	267	101
15,491 (targeted by Ford)	267	1,724

- ◆ **Actions by Ford:** Ford issued a service bulletin to dealers and plans to send an owner notification letter out at the end of May (non-safety).
- ◆ **Ford's Opinion:** Ford offered the following reasons for not conducting a safety recall:
 - ◆ Complete detachment preceded by noticeable looseness and gap at the rear of the console. This would create a audible noise or rattle.
 - ◆ The size of the panel and location relative to the driver and front passenger are such that if it detaches, it will tend to fall downward between them.
 - ◆ Will not injury the driver if it detaches. The weight of the console is less then 5 pounds (approx. 4.5lbs.) And has no sharp edges.

Ford believes that the issuance of a service bulletin and a non-safety owner notification campaign is the appropriate mean of addressing the concern.

- ◆ **ODI Activity:** ODI has contacted one owner that alleged the console detached and hit the driver on the side of the head and traveled to the passenger side, striking his son. Although there were no injuries, the driver was startled and slammed his brakes on wondering what was happening. ODI will conduct telephone interviews and field work to support ODI concerns.

Conclusion: Consoles will continue to detach if they are not replaced. The detachment will distract and startle the driver. This would be particularly hazardous to drivers operating on the side or behind the Windstar since the driver will most likely slam the brakes on and steer erratically.

Historically, if a particular component has been identified and that component is not performing as intended, the failure is predictable, and the failure results in a safety issue, manufacturers have filed safety defect reports with the agency. Ford is aware of the problem and decided to notify owners, but failed to file a defect report with ODI.

Recommendation/Plan of Action: An EA has been opened.