

*Ford Motor Company*

James P. Vondala, Director  
Automotive Safety Office  
Environmental & Safety Engineering

August 18, 2003

Ms. Kathleen C. DeMeter, Director  
Office of Defects Investigation Safety Assurance  
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration  
400 Seventh Street, S. W.  
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Ms. DeMeter:

Subject: EA02-022:NVS-214gth

The Ford Motor Company (Ford) response to the agency's July 14, 2003 letter requesting information relating to fuel delivery module (FDM) caused engine stalling complaints on 2000 through 2002 model year Ford Focus vehicles is attached.

As the agency is aware, Ford has undertaken extensive analysis to understand the causes and effects of the driveability conditions reported on the subject vehicles and is using a fact-specific, contextual approach to considering whether these conditions represent a safety-related defect in the case of the subject vehicles. While Ford does not dispute that under certain circumstances an engine stall may present an unreasonable risk to safety, consistent with agency findings that "stalling per se may not represent a safety risk" (ODI Resume at page 5, PE98-057 (February 11, 1999)), we have concluded that the Focus driveability conditions being investigated do not present an unreasonable risk to motor vehicle safety.

In reaching our conclusion, Ford was mindful of the mid-1980s stalling study conducted by the agency and The Transportation Systems Center entitled "Analysis of Stalling Problems" (Report No. HE702/S7502). As Ford noted in its earlier responses to the agency on this subject, that report found that although the rate of stalling complaints was comparable to the rate of complaints for other safety defect investigations, the rate of stalling-related accidents was lower than in most investigations that have led to recalls. The agency has used this finding to support its own closures of stalling investigations (EA84-029 and EA84-031) stating, in part, that "[a]lthough there are a large number of complaints of stalling vehicles, the risk of injury or death appears to be low." This same conclusion continues to be consistent with our analysis of the information provided in our previous responses and in this response.

As in PE98-057, there is no evidence suggesting that Focus passengers are at a greater risk of being in a stalling-related accident than occupants of other vehicles. Of the many reports, claims and lawsuits alleging FDM-related stalling and driveability issues provided with this response, very few contain allegations of even minor incidents. These incidents include striking curbs, entering a ditch, or minimal collision damage such as scratching a bumper. None of the reports allege an injury.

OFFICE OF DEFECTS  
INVESTIGATION

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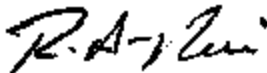


The driveability condition existing in some of the affected vehicles is progressive in nature. A stall condition in the Focus is typically preceded by driveability symptoms such as hesitation, stumbling and loss of power, and customers generally report an awareness of the symptoms and the particular driving maneuvers and conditions under which the symptoms appear. Further, in the event of a stall condition, Ford demonstrated to agency personnel that the vehicle has sufficient momentum to permit the driver to safely exit the roadway and that power steering is maintained at speeds at and above 30 mph. Further, it was demonstrated that minimal increase in steering effort is needed to steer the vehicle upon loss of power assist. Additionally, power braking assist remains for two full brake pedal depressions upon the loss of engine power, providing the driver with sufficient brake power to safely stop the vehicle. In view of the agency's thoughtful consideration of these types of factors in past stalling investigations and the favorable performance of the Focus in these areas, Ford believes the condition in the Focus presents it with a customer satisfaction issue.

As you are aware, Ford is scheduled to visit the agency on August 21, 2003 concerning this investigation. At that time Ford will provide further information concerning its position on this issue. As mentioned in the Attachment, Ford will also provide further information on the parts return program we have been conducting and our investigation of alleged FDM-related accident reports at that time.

If you have any further questions, please contact me.

Sincerely,



James P. Vondale

Attachment

**FORD MOTOR COMPANY (FORD) RESPONSE TO EA02-022**

Ford's response to the agency's July 14, 2003 Engineering Analysis EA02-022 update information request was prepared pursuant to a diligent search for the information requested. While we have employed our best efforts to provide responsive information, the breadth of the agency's request and the requirement that information be provided on an expedited basis make this a difficult task. We nevertheless have made every effort to provide thorough and accurate information, and we would be pleased to meet with agency personnel to discuss any aspect of this Engineering Analysis.

The scope of Ford's investigation conducted to locate responsive information focused on Ford employees most likely to be knowledgeable about the subject matter of this inquiry and on review of Ford files in which responsive information ordinarily would be expected to be found and to which Ford ordinarily would refer, as more fully described in this response. Ford notes that although electronic information was included within the scope of its search, Ford has not attempted to retrieve from computer storage electronic files that were overwritten or deleted. As the agency is aware, such files generally are unavailable to the computer user even if they still exist and are retrievable through expert means. Ford has construed this request as pertaining to vehicles manufactured for sale in the United States, its protectorates and territories.

At the time of the agency's April 8, 2002 PE02-040 information request concerning Focus fuel delivery module (FDM) related driveability concerns, Ford personnel discussed search criteria in telephone conversations with Mr. Richard Boyd and Mr. Jeff Quandt. A copy of the proposed criteria was provided to the agency by facsimile on April 16, 2002 and agreed to on April 18, 2002. Ford's responses to the agency's October 1, 2002 Engineering Analysis Inquiry were also based on Ford's manual review of those reports that were located using the same previously agreed upon search criteria. In discussions with the agency prior to Ford initiating its search for reports to respond to the current EA information request, the agency and Ford agreed that Ford would continue to use the previously used search criteria with certain modifications that are described in detail within Appendix A of this Attachment. It was also agreed that Ford would use a report cut-off date of June 30, 2003 during its update of file searches to facilitate a timely response to this request.

Answers to your specific questions are set forth below. As requested, after each numeric designation, we have set forth verbatim the request for information, followed by our response. Unless otherwise stated, Ford has undertaken to provide responsive information dated from October 1, 2002, the date of your last inquiry, up to and including June 30, 2003. Ford has searched business units and/or affiliates within the following offices for responsive information: Environmental and Safety Engineering, Ford Customer Service Division, Marketing and Sales Operations, Quality, Office of the General Counsel.

**Request 1**

State the number of each of the following, received by Ford, or of which Ford is otherwise aware, which relate to, or may relate to, the Alleged Defect in the Subject Vehicles:

- a. Consumer complaints including, but not limited to, owner complaints;
- b. Field reports, including dealer field reports;
- c. Reports involving a crash, injury, or fatality, based on the claims against the

- manufacturer involving a death or injury, notices received by the manufacturer alleging or providing that a death or injury was caused by a possible defect in a subject vehicle, property damage claims, consumer complaints, or field reports;
- d. Property damage claims;
  - e. Third-party arbitration proceedings where Ford is or was a party to the arbitration; and
  - f. Lawsuits, both pending and closed, in which Ford is or was a defendant or codefendant.

For subparts "a" through "d," state the total number of each item (e.g., consumer complaints, field reports, etc.) separately. Multiple reports of the same incident are to be counted separately (i.e., a consumer complaint and a field report involving the same incident in which a crash occurred are to be counted as a crash report, a field report and a consumer complaint).

For item "f," identify the parties to the action, as well as the caption, court, docket number, and date on which the complaint or other document initiating the action was filed.

For item "f," identify any lawsuits that seek class action status.

For each report identify whether the affected vehicle has been originally built with an (a) original or first design level FDM installed in the subject vehicles ("original" FDM); (b) the Interim FDM installed in the subject vehicles on or around June, 2001 ("Interim" FDM); or (c) the current or "final" FDM installed in the subject vehicles beginning on or around December, 2001 ("current" FDM), provide the vehicle build date associated with each report if Ford is not able to determine the design level of the FDM installed in the vehicles identified as being responsive to this question.

For each item listed, provide a summary listing the following information:

- a. Ford's file number or other identifier used;
- b. The category of the item, (i.e., a consumer complaint, field report, etc.);
- c. Vehicle owner or fleet name (and fleet contact person), address, and telephone number;
- d. Vehicle's VIN;
- e. Vehicle's make, model and model year;
- f. Vehicle's mileage at time of incident;
- g. Incident date;
- h. Report or claim date;
- i. Whether a crash is alleged;
- j. Whether a fire is alleged;
- k. Whether property damage is alleged;
- l. Number of alleged injuries, if any;
- m. Number of alleged fatalities, if any.

Provide this information in Microsoft Access 2000, or a compatible format, entitled "EA02-022, Request Number 1, Field Performance and Complaint Information as of June 30, 2003."

**ANSWER**

For purposes of identifying reports of incidents potentially involving the alleged defect and any related documents, Ford has gathered "owner reports" and "field reports" maintained by Ford Customer Service Division (FCSD), Intensified Customer Concern Definition (ICCD) data maintained by Ford's Quality Office, fleet reports maintained in a Fleet Test Database, and claim and lawsuit information maintained by Ford's Office of the General Counsel (OGC).

Descriptions of the FCSD owner and field report systems, the ICCD and the Fleet Test Database systems, and the criteria used to search each of these are provided electronically in Appendix A (file: 2003-8-18\_Appendix\_A) on the enclosed CD. These searches were further refined to locate possibly relevant reports for review by using key word searches (based on the amended April 19, 2002 agreement noted above) in Ford's review tool, the Electronic Data Download System (EDDS); these key word search criteria are also provided in Appendix B.

The following categorizations were used in the review of reports located in each of these searches:

<u>Category</u>	<u>Allegation</u>
A1	Stalls (Alleged to be related to the FDM)
A2	Driveability issue without the vehicle stopping/stalling (Alleged FDM Related)
A3	Stalls, vehicle at rest (Starts then stalls, stalls when put in gear, etc.) Alleged FDM Related
B1	Stalls, unknown if FDM related*
B2	Driveability or no starts, unknown if FDM Related*
B3	Ambiguous if related to stalling or driveability (No stalls, etc.) Alleged FDM Related*

\*Ford has also included owner reports that are ambiguous as to whether they meet the alleged defect criteria. Based upon engineering judgement, Ford does not believe that the reports included in the "B" categories can be considered as related to the "alleged defect." However, in the interest of complete disclosure they are being provided for the agency's information.

**Owner Reports:** The updated search and review of the Ford Master Owner Relations Systems (MORS) database records, as described in Appendix A, identified the following number of owner reports in accordance with the categories described above:

<u>Category</u>	<u>A1</u>	<u>A2</u>	<u>A3</u>
<u>Reports</u>	358	82	9

Copies of these owner reports are provided in the MORS III portion of the electronic database contained in Appendix B (file: 2003-8-18\_Appendix B) on the enclosed CD. The categorization of each report is identified in the "Category" field. When we were able to identify that responsive (i.e., not ambiguous) duplicate owner reports for an alleged incident were received, each of these duplicate reports is marked accordingly, and the group is counted as one report. To do this, reports with duplicate VINs dated within two days of each other were assumed to be the same incident, others dated more than two days apart were reviewed and counted as one report as appropriate based on the review. In other cases, certain vehicles may have experienced more than one incident and have more than one report associated with their VINs. These reports have been intentionally counted separately.

**Legal Contacts:** Ford is providing, in Appendix A, a description of Legal Contacts and the activity that is responsible for this information, Litigation Prevention. To the extent that responsive (i.e., unambiguous) owner reports reflect that they are Legal Contacts, Ford has gathered the related files from the Litigation Prevention section. Based on this search, eight files were located and are provided in Appendix C. It should be noted that five of the litigation prevention files (Iaconelli, Thompson (Eleanor), Hart, San Miguel, and Olkua) are also shown on the lawsuit and claims log.

**ICCD Information:** An updated search of the ICCD database as described in Appendix A located no reports that relate to the alleged defect or are ambiguous as to whether they relate to the alleged defect.

**Fleet Reports:** In addition to fleet reports that may be contained in the owner reports or field reports identified in this response, Ford conducted an updated search of its Fleet Test Database as described in Appendix A for reports that may relate to the alleged defect in the subject vehicles. No fleet reports were identified.

**Field Reports:** The updated search and review of the Ford Common Quality Indicator System (CQIS) database records, as described in Appendix A, identified the following number of field reports in accordance with the categories described above:

Category	A1	A2	A3
Reports	45	42	5

Copies of these field reports are provided in the CQIS portion of the electronic database contained in Appendix B. The categorization of each report is identified in the "Category" field. When we were able to identify that responsive (i.e., not ambiguous) duplicate owner reports for an alleged incident were received, each of these duplicate reports is marked accordingly, and the group is counted as one report. In other cases, certain vehicles may have experienced more than one incident and have more than one report associated with their VINs. These reports have been counted separately. Ford has not attempted to identify the design level of FDM that may have been involved with each of the reports provided. However, each report provides the vehicle's build date, which provides an indication of the FDM design level the vehicle was equipped with at the time of its production. The original design FDM was used in production before June 14, 2001. The "interim" design FDM was used in production from June 14, 2001 until the "final" design began to be used in production on December 13, 2001 at the Wayne Assembly Plant and on February 14, 2002 at the Hermosillo Assembly Plant.

**VOQ Data:** This information request did not include Vehicle Owner's Questionnaires (VOQs).

**Crash/Injury Incident Claims:** For purposes of identifying alleged accidents or injuries potentially involving the alleged defect, Ford has reviewed responsive (i.e., FDM related) owner and field reports, lawsuits and claims, and warranty claims. Based on a reasonable and diligent search, Ford located the following reports alleging an accident (where the subject vehicle struck something or was struck) that may be related to the alleged defect.

**Four owner (MORS) reports**

- 1FAPP343X1W133509 – Minor accident reportedly no collision damage
- 1FAPP3435YW380348 – Minor incident reportedly struck a curb
- 1FAPP39P22W280311 – Minor accident reported, "scratch on bumper"
- 3FAPP31372R233866 – Minor incident reported as striking a curb
- 1FAPP3835YW281913 – Minor incident reportedly bumped a curb

**No field (CQIS) reports****Two warranty claims**

- 3FAFP31372R233866 – Same incident reported in the associated MORs listed above
- 1FAFP33P0YW427452 – Minor incident reportedly struck a curb

**Lawsuits and claims**

- 1FAFP34P81W332173 – The Harrell suit alleges when the Focus's power out out, a driver behind it ran into a ditch to avoid the Focus. Warranty records for the vehicle indicate the mass air sensor and PCM were repaired the date of the incident and one month after the incident respectively. The vehicle's FDM was replaced three months after the incident. It is unclear which repair may be responsible for the alleged incident.

One of the owner reports, VIN 1FAFP3435YW380348, is also the subject of a Litigation Prevention File provided in Appendix C. No injuries or fatalities are alleged in any of the above reports or lawsuits. None of the other non-ambiguous reports were identified as containing allegations that the vehicle "partially or completely departed the road surface in a manner not intended by the vehicle operator whether or not the vehicle contacts another vehicle or object." None contain allegations of an incident involving a fire. One warranty claim, VIN 1FAFP34P81W129170, states that the vehicle was involved in a non-described accident after which the vehicle would not start. It appears that the FDM repair was due to the accident and not the cause of the accident. Lawsuit and claim information is provided as described below. Ford also notes that some of the reports in the database coded as ambiguous also contain allegations of an accident or property damage. Upon closer inspection of these reports, six do not appear to be due to the reported stalling condition. Note that Ford's observations concerning these alleged incidents are based on the text of the reports and, in some cases, additional information gathered by contacting the owners of the vehicles. More detailed information concerning these owner contacts will be provided during the Ford/NHTSA meeting scheduled for August 21, 2003 concerning this investigation.

**Claims and Lawsuits and Arbitrations:** For purposes of identifying incidents potentially involving the alleged defect, Ford has gathered claim and lawsuit information maintained by Ford's Office of the General Counsel (OGC). Ford's OGC is responsible for handling product liability lawsuits, claims, and consumer breach of warranty lawsuits and arbitrations against the Company.

Based on a reasonable and diligent search, Ford located 48 lawsuits (including one class action suit), no claims or consumer breach of warranty lawsuits, and no arbitrations related to the alleged defect in the subject vehicles. Ford has also located lawsuits that are ambiguous as to whether they meet the alleged defect criteria. We have included these lawsuits as "non-specific allegations" for your review because of the broad scope of the request. Based on our engineering judgment, the information in these lawsuits and claims is insufficient to support a determination that they pertain to the alleged defect. We are providing the requested detailed information, where available, on the responsive and ambiguous lawsuits and claims in our Log of Lawsuits and Claims, as Appendix D (file: 2003-8-18\_Appendix\_D) on the enclosed CD. It should be noted that five of the lawsuit and claim files (Iaconelli, Thompson (Eleanor), Hart, San Miguel, and Olkus) are also referenced in the Legal Contacts section, with accompanying Litigation Prevention files attached. With regard to these lawsuits and claims, Ford has not undertaken to contact outside law firms to obtain additional documentation.

**Request 2**

State the number of warranty claims, including extended warranty claims, and requests for "good will," field, or zone adjustments received by Ford from start of subject vehicle production to present that relate to the alleged defect in the subject vehicles, by model, model year, calendar month, and problem claim code, if any. Each problem claim code must be identified.

For each item listed, provide a summary listing the following information:

- a. Ford's file number or other identifier used;
- b. The category of the item, (i.e., a warranty complaint, "good will" adjustment, etc.);
- c. Vehicle owner or fleet name (and fleet contact person), address, and telephone number;
- d. Vehicle's VIN;
- e. Vehicle's make, model and model year;
- f. Vehicle's mileage at time of incident;
- g. Incident date;
- h. Report or claim date;
- i. Whether a crash is alleged;
- j. Whether a fire is alleged;
- k. Whether property damage is alleged;
- l. Number of alleged injuries, if any;
- m. Number of alleged fatalities, if any.

Provide this information in Microsoft Access 2000, or a compatible format, entitled "EA02022, Request Number 2 - Warranty Information as of June 30, 2003."

**Answer**

In response to this information request, Ford's Analytical Warranty System (AWS) was searched for all claims meeting the criteria described in Appendix A. The resulting claims were then reviewed individually for allegations that may relate to the alleged defect. This search and review of the Ford AWS database records identified the following number of non-duplicative warranty claims in accordance with the categories described above:

Category	A1	A2	A3
Reports	7374	976	493

Electronic copies of these claims are provided in the AWS portion of the electronic database in Appendix B. The categorization of each report is identified in the "Category" field. When we were able to identify that duplicate claims for an alleged incident were received, each of these duplicate claims is marked accordingly and the group is counted as one report. In other cases, certain vehicles may have experienced more than one incident and have more than one claim associated with their VINs. These claims have been counted separately. Ford assumes that providing the warranty claims in the electronic database format meets the requirements of this request, because the agency can review or order the claims as desired. Ford has not attempted to identify the design level of FDM that may have been involved with each of the claims provided. However, each claim provides the vehicle's production date which as previously noted provides an indication of the FDM design level the vehicle was equipped with at the time of its production.



An electronic file containing the customer concern codes and the warranty condition codes is provided in Appendix A.

Requests for "goodwill, field, or zone adjustments" received by Ford to date that relate to the alleged defect in the subject vehicles, if any, would be indicated in the MORs reports identified above in response to Request 1.

### Request 3

Describe in detail the search criteria used by Ford to identify the claims identified in response to Request No. 1 and 2, including the labor operations, complaints and problem codes, part numbers and any other pertinent parameters used. Provide the list of all labor operations, labor operation descriptions, problem codes, and problem code descriptions applicable to the alleged defect in the subject vehicles. Describe in detail the search criteria used above.

### Answer

As stated in Ford's responses to Request 1 and 2, the search criteria used by Ford to identify the reports and claims provided in those responses is provided in Appendix A.

### Request 4

Produce copies of all service, warranty, and other documents that relate to, or may relate to, the alleged defect in the subject vehicles, that Ford has issued to any dealers, regional, or zone offices, field offices, fleet purchasers, or other entities. This includes, but is not limited to, bulletins, advisories, informational documents, training documents, or other documents or communications, with the exception of standard shop manuals. Also include the latest draft copy of any communication that Ford is considering or planning to issue within the next 120 days.

### Answer

For purposes of identifying communications to dealers, zone office, or field offices pertaining, at least in part, to the alleged defect in the subject vehicles, Ford has reviewed the following FCSD databases and files: The On-Line Automotive Service Information System (OASIS) containing Technical Service Bulletins (TSBs) and Special Service Messages (SSMs); Internal Service Messages (ISMs) contained in the CQIS; and Field Review Committee (FRC) files. We assume this request does not seek information related to electronic communications between Ford and its dealers regarding the order, delivery, or payment for replacement parts, so we have not included these kinds of information in our answer.

A description of Ford's OASIS messages, Internal Service Messages, and the Field Review Committee files and the search criteria used are provided in Appendix B.

OASIS Messages: Ford has identified no additional SSMs and no TSBs that may relate to the alleged defect in the subject vehicles since our response of May 22, 2002.

Internal Service Messages: Ford has identified no ISMs that may relate to the alleged defect in the subject vehicles. Ford, however, is including (in Appendix E) two ISMs 02-11-017

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and 01-03-029 that relate to the subject FDM and possible inaccurate fuel gauge readings. Each of the messages addresses issues where the fuel gauge indicates that there is less fuel in the vehicle's fuel tank than the actual amount. Ford does not believe these messages are responsive to the alleged defect but is providing them for your information.

Field Review Committee (FRC): Ford has identified no FRC files that may relate to the alleged defect in the subject vehicles since our response of May 22, 2002.

Request 5

Identify the cut-off date for the above-requested information if other than June 30, 2003.

Answer

Search dates included October 2, 2002 through June 30, 2003 for owner complaints and field reports. Warranty claims search dates included October 1, 2002 through June 30, 2003. Beginning search dates used in response to this inquiry correspond to the cut-off dates used in response to the agency's October 1, 2002 inquiry.

Request 6

Provide a copy of the script or outline that Ford or Ford's agent is using or plans to use to select which candidate Ford Focus vehicles will be examined and/or test driven as part of the FDM investigation work plan that Ford proposed to ODI at the June 18, 2003 investigation review meeting.

Answer

Prior to replying to this inquiry, representatives of the agency have participated in drive evaluations of vehicles equipped with fuel tank/fuel delivery module assemblies removed from vehicles that had been returned to dealerships for repair. These evaluations were conducted at the Ford Dearborn Proving Grounds on July 31, 2003 and August 1, 2003. During that visit, Ford's methods of selecting vehicles to be examined, the vehicle evaluations conducted, and the bench tests performed were described and/or demonstrated. Ford representatives also participated in a drive evaluation of one of the owner's vehicles with the agency's Mr. Tom Bowman before the fuel delivery module and tank were removed, shipped to Dearborn, Michigan and used as part of the July 31/August 1 evaluations. On July 21, 2003, an e-mail to Mr. Bowman provided a list of questions used during Ford interviews of the repaired vehicles' owners.

As the agency representatives were informed during the above evaluation trip, the vehicles were not "selected" in any manner except that they were identified as vehicles that were taken to the dealer for an FDM repair associated with a driveability or stalling condition. Potential vehicles were identified by reviewing daily service part sales records and calling those dealers that had ordered parts on an expedited basis. If it was determined that the part was being ordered to repair a vehicle with a suspected FDM related driveability/stall condition and repairs had not begun or been completed, arrangements were made to have a Ford representative evaluate the vehicle and, if the reported condition could be verified, the removed parts were returned for further vehicle evaluation and bench testing. Further information concerning the results of this program will be provided during the Ford/NHTSA meeting scheduled for August 21, 2003 concerning this investigation.

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