



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

ODI RESUME

Investigation: EA 03-014
Prompted By: PE03-011
Date Opened: 08/22/2003
Principal Investigator: MICHAEL LEE
Subject: INADVERTENT SIDE AIR BAG DEPLOYMENT

Manufacturer: FORD MOTOR COMPANY
Products: 2001-2003 LINCOLN TOWN CAR (VEHICLES BUILT BEFORE DEC. 2002)
Population: 140,000 (APPROX.)

Problem Description: COMPLAINTS ALLEGE THAT THE DRIVER'S OR FRONT PASSENGER'S SIDE AIR BAG DEPLOYED WHILE DRIVING WITHOUT ANY IMPACT OR FROM AN UNDERCARRIAGE IMPACT.

FAILURE REPORT SUMMARY

	ODI	Manufacturer	Total
Complaints:	8	130	138
Crashes/Fires:	0	0	0
Injury Incidents:	3	5	8
# Injuries:	5	5	10
Fatality Incidents:	0	0	0
# Fatalities:	0	0	0
Other*:	0	120	120

*Description Of Other: WARRANTY CLAIMS (INCLUDES 72 WARRANTY CLAIMS ALSO REPORTED AS COMPLAINTS).

Action: AN ENGINEERING ANALYSIS HAS BEEN OPENED.

Engineer: Michael Lee MJL

Date: 08/22/2003

Div. Chief: Thomas Z. Cooper

Date: 08/22/2003

Office Dir.: Kathleen C. DeMeter

Date: 08/22/2003

Summary: ODI has identified 138 complaints alleging inadvertent or non-crash deployment of side air bags on model year (MY) 2001 through early MY 2003 Town Cars. Most of the complaints allege that one of the side air bags deployed while driving without any impact, however, other complaints allege a side air bag deployed while driving over road debris, pothole, gravel road, etc. Inspections of some of the complaint vehicles performed by Lincoln dealerships and/or Ford representatives indicated vehicles showed either minor undercarriage impact (e.g., "scratches," "scrapes," "scuffs," and "dents") or no evidence of impact. Ford changed its supplier of the side crash sensors for the MY 2001 Town Cars. Ford states that the algorithm in the MY 2001 Town Cars is different from the previous model year's design, and that it is designed to provide improved occupant protection in moderate speed side pole impacts. In December 2002 (i.e., early MY 2003 vehicle production), the crash sensors were moved from the floor of vehicle to near the base of B-pillars in order to reduce the incidents of inadvertent side air bag deployments. An Engineering Analysis has been opened.

8.26.03