



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

Memorandum

Subject: **Test Request:** Analysis of Failed Rear Door Latches

Date: OCT 8 2004

From: Kathleen C. DeMeter, Director
Office of Defects Investigation

Reply to
Attn. of:

NVS-212jfa
EA04-023

To: Michael Monk, Director
Vehicle Research and Test Center

This memorandum requests the Vehicle Research and Test Center (VRTC) to conduct the testing as described below.

BACKGROUND: On August 18, 2004, the Office of Defects Investigation (ODI) upgraded Preliminary Evaluation PE04-033 to Engineering Analysis EA04-023. The subject of the investigation is alleged door latch failure in the rear passenger doors on Ford Focus vehicles. The complainants alleged that as a result of the latch failures a rear door had come open while driving their vehicle. Some complainants reported that, at times, the doors could also be difficult to open or close. In consumer interviews conducted by ODI, 17 consumers reported that when the door came open, it opened completely. Also, several complainants reported that corrosion of the door latch mechanism caused binding of the latch. Field sample latches returned to ODI by consumers exhibit severe corrosion to the latch assemblies. Please note that with the exception of two, all of the reports come from northern "salt belt" states with reports coming from CT, IL, IN, MA, MI, NH, NY, OH, PA, RI, and WI.

SUBJECT VEHICLES: all MY Ford Focus vehicles with rear passenger doors.

ALLEGED DEFECT: any failure, malfunction or otherwise unsatisfactory performance of the door latches of the rear passenger doors.

TEST LATCHES: Many of the ODI complainants reside in Ohio and VRTC will be provided with their contact information. VRTC should contact these complainants directly and arrange with them to have their latches replaced. The latches removed from these vehicles should be retained by VRTC for analysis and testing. ODI will also work to obtain latches from other complainants' vehicles and will furnish them to VRTC as well.

TEST OBJECTIVES: The primary objective is to verify and identify the existence of any failure or condition that would compromise or prevent the door latch from performing its intended function.



RECOMMENDED APPROACH: VRTC should prepare a test plan designed to meet the above test objective. A flexible approach may be taken, but the ODI test monitor, Mr. John Abbott, should be kept informed of all major developments that might require substantial changes to the original test plan. John can be reached on (202) 366-5221.

REPORTS: A test report shall be provided upon completion of testing.

SCHEDULE: We would like to have the test work completed by November 30, 2004. Please coordinate the test schedule with ODL.

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