



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

ODI RESUME

Investigation: EA 05-004
 Prompted By: Consumer Complaints
 Date Opened: 02/17/2005 Date Closed: 07/06/2005
 Principal Investigator: Peter C. Ong
 Subject: Front Seat Belt Buckle Assembly

Manufacturer: Ford Motor Company
 Products: MY 2001 Ford Lt Trucks, SUVs, Minivans and Large Pass. Cars
 Population: 1,011,984

Problem Description: Allegation of buckle failure after passing original recall inspection.

FAILURE REPORT SUMMARY

	ODI	Manufacturer	Total
Complaints:	15	543	558
Crashes/Fires:	0	0	0
Injury Incidents:	0	7	7
# Injuries:	0	7	7
Fatality Incidents:	0	0	0
# Fatalities:	0	0	0
Other*:	0	11,131	11,131

*Description of Other: 11,131 warranty claims that required buckle replacement after passing recall inspection service.

Action: Close this engineering analysis (EA)

Engineer: Peter C. Ong *PCO*

Date: 07/06/2005

Div. Chief: Thomas Z. Cooper

Date: 07/06/2005

Office Dir.: Kathleen C. DeMeter

Date: 07/06/2005

Summary: During the initial recall campaign in 2001, the subject vehicles were inspected by Ford dealerships using a test tool that would detect a defective front seat outboard seat belt buckle assembly. Approximately one million vehicles passed the inspection test for one or both front buckles. Subsequent to the recall service action, ODI received 15 consumer reports alleging that a "passed inspection" buckle subsequently failed to latch or inadvertently unlatched during use. In addition, Ford has identified 543 owner and field reports alleging buckle failure subsequent to passing the inspection test.

Ford tested and examined over 100 warranty-returned buckles and found that 44% of the buckles had no problem or a condition not related to the recall inspection (non-latch related buckle damage or foreign contamination). Warranty claims were highest during the 18-month period after the start of the recall (July 2001) and have been declining during the past 24 months. Over the past 12 months, Ford has received approximately 12 warranty claims per month out of a vehicle population of about one million. Complaint counts are also decreasing. During the past seven months, ODI has received only two complaints.

A safety-related defect has not been identified at this time and further use of agency resources does not appear to be warranted. Accordingly, this investigation is closed. The closing of this investigation does not constitute a finding by NHTSA that a safety-related defect does not exist. The agency reserves the right to take further action if warranted by the circumstances.

PCO 7/7/05