



Q&A

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Communications

NHTSA Investigation: 1995-2003 Ford Windstar Underhood fires – May 2008

[The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) is expected to open a preliminary evaluation as soon as May 8 concerning alleged underhood fires involving 1995-2003 Ford Windstar minivans based on approximately 60 customer reports. Customers have reported underhood fires while driving and in unattended vehicles. No accidents, injuries or fatalities are expected to be reported.]

The vehicles were equipped with Texas Instruments' speed control deactivation switches that are not powered at all times, which have not been included in recalls involving switches that are powered at all times. Media may try to connect the two and ask why vehicles with not-powered-at-all-times switches haven't been recalled.]

Key Message

- **Ford is cooperating with NHTSA on this investigation. We have continued to monitor the field performance of our vehicles and we do not believe there is an elevated risk of fire in the vehicles included in NHTSA's investigation.**

Q&A

Q. What types of fires is NHTSA investigating?

A. As NHTSA's Resume indicates, the investigation concerns underhood fires alleged to have occurred for any reason.

Q. Has Ford received similar reports?

A. There are many reasons for underhood fires in any make of vehicle, including improper repairs and modifications to the electrical or fuel system. As a result, there are alleged underhood fires in virtually all makes, including Windstar.

Q. Were these vehicles involved in the deactivation switch recall?

A. No.

Q. What type of speed control deactivation switch do they have, and who supplied them?

A. This investigation is related to underhood fire allegations. We are working with NHTSA to investigate the circumstances and possible causes relating to these reports. Windstars have Texas Instruments speed control deactivation switches. However, they are not powered at all times. The recalls involved switches that were powered at all times for risk of unattended fires.

Q. How were there unattended Windstar fires if the switches are not powered at all times? [If investigation includes types of fires]

A. There are many reasons for underhood fires in all types of vehicles, including improper repairs, uncertified aftermarket components, etc...

- Q. Have there been fires in vehicles with deactivation switches that are not powered at all times?**
A. There are many reasons for underhood fires in all types of vehicles, including improper repairs, uncertified aftermarket repairs, etc...
- Q. What do you recommend customers do with their vehicles why you're investigating them?**
A. This is an opening of an investigation – like many others that the agency opens – and there is no need for customers to do anything at this time. We will provide details after we investigate this matter thoroughly with NHTSA.
- Q. Does this investigation include vehicles that already have been repaired?**
A. No. Windstar has not been involved in past deactivation switch recalls.
- Q. This investigation seems to identify a different problem with the switch – how can you be sure recalled vehicles have been repaired properly?**
A. The replacement switches were designed to be much more robust to help eliminate leakage problems. The other repair, a fused jumper harnesses, runs at a lower current to help prevent overheating and helps protect against oil from leaking to other components.
- Q. How can you be sure you've captured all vehicles with the risk of unattended fires?**
A. We have conducted an exhaustive search and analysis of vehicle information to identify this population.
- Q. Is it possible there's something else wrong with the switch that's leading to fires? [If investigation includes the deactivation switch as possible cause]**
A. Ford continually monitors the field performance of its products and we have not identified defect condition in these vehicles related to fires. This is an investigation into underhood fires and we are working with NHTSA to investigate the matter.
- Q. Isn't it about time you just recall every vehicle with these switches?**
A. Recalling vehicles that do not have a safety defect would be irresponsible and diminish the importance of addressing important safety risks. We conducted an exhaustive search and analysis of vehicle information to identify vehicles included in the previous recalls.

Status of Recall Q&A

[Note: If asked about accidents, injuries or deaths related to this condition: Ford has no evidence indicating that there have been injuries or deaths related to the configuration.]

- Q. Is this a safety recall?**
A. Yes, it is a voluntary safety recall initiated by Ford.
- Q. What is the repair procedure on this recall?**
A. The service action for most vehicles involves the installation of a new wiring harness while certain vehicles will get a new deactivation switch. These are quick repairs.
- Q. When will the truck wiring harness be available – are vehicles repaired before then safe?**
A. Truck customers will receive final repair notices by the end of May and can then immediately schedule appointments with their dealers.
- Q. Will this end the recalls on the issue?**
A. We have conducted an exhaustive search and analysis of vehicle information to identify this population. We are confident these actions have appropriately addressed this issue.

Q. How many accidents, fires and injuries have been reported?

A. Ford has no evidence indicating that there have been related injuries or deaths.

Q. Is there litigation pending?

A. Yes. [Refer any other questions to Marcey Evans]

Q. Should Ford be fined as safety advocates suggest because the recall dragged on for a decade?

A. No, we only are focused on our customers and are ahead of schedule after creating new repair solutions and ramping up new suppliers. Ford has some of the highest recall completion rates in the industry due to our extensive and repeated mailings to customers well beyond the legally required notices. We also encourage our dealers to check for any open recalls every time any Ford vehicle goes to a dealership for service of any kind.

Q. What should truck customers do before they receive final repair notices?

A. Truck customers will receive final repair notices by the end of May and can immediately schedule appointments with their dealers

Q. Isn't the completion rate low because customers don't want to give up cruise control operation?

A. The completion rate is lower than typical because most of these vehicles are older models. Completion rates are always lower for older model vehicles, so this is not surprising. We also believe the many customers are making the choice to park their vehicles outside while they wait until final repair parts are available rather than having the interim service performed, which disables the speed control function until the final repair is complete.

Q. What is the universal fused jumper harness and when will it be available?

A. The universal FJH will contain a fuse in each side of the circuit to address polarity complexity issues, and a connector that is compatible with all SCDSs. The universal FJH, which is now available, will significantly reduce the repair complexity of the program

Q. Once the new harness is installed, will the cruise control work normally?

A. Yes.

Q. Has NHTSA reopened its investigation?

A. No. Although NHTSA did not reopen its investigation, Ford and NHTSA have continued to communicate to address a few isolated complaints relating to this concern.

Q. Does the supplier take some responsibility for this recall?

A. Recall responsibility is a private matter between Ford and its supplier.

Q. Is this the largest recall ever? Ford's largest? If not, what was Ford's largest?

A. We cannot speak for the rest of the industry, but this supplemental recall is not Ford's largest.

(If asked)

- 1996, 8.6 million vehicles for ignition switches.
- 2001 6.5 million vehicles for 13 million Firestone AT Wilderness tires. Note: Firestone was not a safety recall; it was a B program.

(Also if asked about all combined cruise control deactivation switch recalls)

- Combined with previous recalls involving the Texas Instrument cruise control deactivation switches that were powered at all times, yes this is Ford largest – 9.8 million vehicles.

- The NHTSA may state 12 million vehicles have been recalled. This would be the number of vehicles produced. Ford reports 9.8 million vehicles – the number we estimate are still registered.

Q. How much is this recall costing Ford?

A. We do not disclose costs on such actions.

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