



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

Memorandum

Subject: **TEST REQUEST:** EA08-018 Alleged Front Coil
Spring Fracture on Ford Taurus / Mercury Sable

Date: May 11, 2009

In Reply Refer To: NVS-210

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

To: Dr. Roger Saul, Director
Vehicle Research and Test Center

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

BACKGROUND: The Office of Defects Investigation (ODI) is conducting an investigation (EA08-018) into alleged front suspension coil spring fracture on certain model year (MY) 2002 through 2003 Ford Taurus and Mercury Sable vehicles, which may result in puncture of the adjacent tire, loss of inflation pressure, and subsequent loss of vehicle control. Previously, ODI has investigated both front and rear suspension coil spring fractures on substantially similar Ford Taurus and Mercury Sable vehicles (PE02-080, PE04-044, PE05-054, and EA06-002) and has influenced a safety recall (04V-332) on substantially similar Ford Taurus and Mercury Sable vehicles for defective front suspension coil springs which may fracture and puncture the adjacent tire. However, the manufacturer has changed its position and no longer believes that front suspension coil spring fractures on the subject vehicles pose an unreasonable risk to motor vehicle safety.

OBJECTIVE: The test objective is to assess the risk of tire puncture from a front suspension coil spring fracture, including the following:

1. Assess the effect on vehicle control at various speeds including both straight line driving and combined cornering and braking maneuvers.
2. Assess the likelihood of coil spring fracture and subsequent tire puncture at low speeds as compared to the likelihood at higher speeds.

TEST EQUIPMENT AND PROCEDURE: The test equipment and test procedure can be determined after further discussion between ODI and VRTC.

TEST VEHICLE(S): VRTC shall obtain one MY2002 or MY2003 Ford Taurus or Mercury Sable vehicle to conduct testing. Either sedan or station wagon models would be sufficient.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: The Principal Investigator for EA08-018 is Mr. Kyle Bowker of my staff (Phone: 202-366-9597). He is available to discuss investigation and testing details with your engineer.

FINAL REPORT: It is requested that the test work and final report be completed to a schedule to be determined in discussion with ODI. Preliminary test results should be completed no later than June 15, 2009.

cc:

Mr. Jeffrey Quandt, NVS-213