



U.S. Department  
of Transportation

**National Highway  
Traffic Safety  
Administration**

MAR 30 2011

1200 New Jersey Avenue SE.  
Washington, DC 20590

**CERTIFIED MAIL**  
**RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED**

Mr. James Vondale, Director  
Automotive Safety Office, Environmental and Safety Compliance  
Ford Motor Company  
330 Town Center Drive, Suite 400  
Dearborn, MI 48126

NVS-213dlr  
EA09-013

Dear Mr. Vondale:

The Office of Defects Investigation (ODI) of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) upgraded its investigation of allegations of unintended vehicle movement, in park as opposed to in gear, in model year (MY) 2002-2005 Ford Explorer and Mercury Mountaineer vehicles to an Engineering Analysis (EA09-013). We have expanded the scope of the investigation to include components other than the brake shift interlock system (in particular, to include the transmission park pawl assembly components), as well as an additional vehicle model (the Lincoln Aviator). This letter requests additional information to assist us in our investigation.

ODI has received 32 Vehicle Owner Questionnaires (VOQs) alleging unintended vehicle movement while the vehicle is in park (or the vehicle is such that it is perceived by the driver as being in park), or difficulty shifting the steering column shift lever into the park position in MY 2002 – 2005 Ford Explorer and Mercury Mountaineer vehicles. Twelve of these VOQs also allege a crash resulted from the unintended vehicle movement. ODI has also received 28 VOQs alleging difficulty shifting the shift lever from reverse into park. A copy of each of the VOQs is enclosed for your information.

Unless otherwise stated in the text, the following definitions apply to these information requests:

- **Subject vehicles:** (1) all MY 2002-2005 Ford Explorer and Mercury Mountaineer vehicles manufactured for sale or lease in the United States; and (2) all MY 2003-2005 Lincoln Aviator vehicles manufactured for sale or lease in the United States.
- **Peer vehicles:** MY 2001 and MY 2006 Ford Explorer and Mercury Mountaineer vehicles manufactured for sale or lease in the United States
- **Subject components:** all steering column assemblies, brake shift interlock solenoids and all transmission assembly components (parking pawl, linkages, rooster combs, parking gear, etc.) related to the Park function manufactured on the subject vehicles.

- **Ford:** Ford Motor Company, all of its past and present officers and employees, whether assigned to its principal offices or any of its field or other locations, including all of its divisions, subsidiaries (whether or not incorporated) and affiliated enterprises and all of their headquarters, regional, zone and other offices and their employees, and all agents, contractors, consultants, attorneys and law firms and other persons engaged directly or indirectly (e.g., employee of a consultant) by or under the control of Ford (including all business units and persons previously referred to), who are or, in or after January 1, 2000, were involved in any way with any of the following related to the alleged defect in the subject vehicles:
  - a. Design, engineering, analysis, modification or production (e.g. quality control);
  - b. Testing, assessment or evaluation;
  - c. Consideration, or recognition of potential or actual defects, reporting, record-keeping and information management, (e.g., complaints, field reports, warranty information, part sales), analysis, claims, or lawsuits; or
  - d. Communication to, from or intended for zone representatives, fleets, dealers, or other field locations, including but not limited to people who have the capacity to obtain information from dealers.
  
- **Alleged defect:** unintended vehicle movement while the vehicle is in park (or the vehicle is such that it is perceived by the driver as being in park), or difficulty shifting the steering column shift lever into the park position.
  
- **Document:** "Document(s)" is used in the broadest sense of the word and shall mean all original written, printed, typed, recorded, or graphic matter whatsoever, however produced or reproduced, of every kind, nature, and description, and all non-identical copies of both sides thereof, including, but not limited to, papers, letters, memoranda, correspondence, communications, electronic mail (e-mail) messages (existing in hard copy and/or in electronic storage), faxes, mailgrams, telegrams, cables, telex messages, notes, annotations, working papers, drafts, minutes, records, audio and video recordings, data, databases, other information bases, summaries, charts, tables, graphics, other visual displays, photographs, statements, interviews, opinions, reports, newspaper articles, studies, analyses, evaluations, interpretations, contracts, agreements, jottings, agendas, bulletins, notices, announcements, instructions, blueprints, drawings, as-builts, changes, manuals, publications, work schedules, journals, statistical data, desk, portable and computer calendars, appointment books, diaries, travel reports, lists, tabulations, computer printouts, data processing program libraries, data processing inputs and outputs, microfilms, microfiches, statements for services, resolutions, financial statements, governmental records, business records, personnel records, work orders, pleadings, discovery in any form, affidavits, motions, responses to discovery, all transcripts, administrative filings and all mechanical, magnetic, photographic and electronic records or recordings of any kind, including any storage media associated with computers, including, but not limited to, information on hard drives, floppy disks, backup tapes, and zip drives, electronic communications, including but not limited to, the Internet and shall include any drafts or revisions pertaining to any of the foregoing, all other things similar to any of the foregoing, however denominated by Ford, any other data compilations from which information can be obtained, translated if necessary, into a usable form and any

other documents. For purposes of this request, any document which contains any note, comment, addition, deletion, insertion, annotation, or otherwise comprises a non-identical copy of another document shall be treated as a separate document subject to production. In all cases where original and any non-identical copies are not available, "document(s)" also means any identical copies of the original and all non-identical copies thereof. Any document, record, graph, chart, film or photograph originally produced in color must be provided in color. Furnish all documents whether verified by Ford or not. If a document is not in the English language, provide both the original document and an English translation of the document.

- **Other Terms:** To the extent that they are used in these information requests, the terms "claim," "consumer complaint," "dealer field report," "field report," "fire," "fleet," "good will," "make," "model," "model year," "notice," "property damage," "property damage claim," "rollover," "type," "warranty," "warranty adjustment," and "warranty claim," whether used in singular or in plural form, have the same meaning as found in 49 CFR 579.4.

In order for my staff to evaluate the alleged defect, certain information is required. Pursuant to 49 U.S.C. § 30166, please provide numbered responses to the following information requests. Insofar as Ford has previously provided a document to ODI, Ford may produce it again or identify the document, the document submission to ODI in which it was included and the precise location in that submission where the document is located. When documents are produced, the documents shall be produced in an identified, organized manner that corresponds with the organization of this information request letter (including all individual requests and subparts). When documents are produced and the documents would not, standing alone, be self-explanatory, the production of documents shall be supplemented and accompanied by explanation.

Please repeat the applicable request verbatim above each response. After Ford's response to each request, identify the source of the information and indicate the last date the information was gathered.

1. State, by model and model year, the number of (1) MY 2001 and MY 2006 Ford Explorer and Mercury Mountaineer vehicles, and (2) MY 2003-2005 Lincoln Aviator vehicles manufactured for sale or lease in the United States. Separately, for each of these vehicles manufactured to date by Ford, state the following:
  - a. Vehicle Identification Number (VIN);
  - b. Make;
  - c. Model;
  - d. Model Year;
  - e. Date of manufacture;
  - f. Assembly Plant;
  - g. Engine (cylinders, displacement, and Ford engine code);
  - h. Transmission Code;
  - i. Date warranty coverage commenced; and

- j. The State in the United States where the vehicles was originally sold or leased (or delivered for sale or lease).
2. State the number of each of the following, received by Ford, or of which Ford is otherwise aware, which relate to, or may relate to, the alleged defect in **MY 2002-2005 Ford Explorer and Mercury Mountaineer, MY 2003-2005 Lincoln Aviator, and peer vehicles MY 2001 and MY 2006 Ford Explorer and Mercury Mountaineer** vehicles manufactured for sale or lease in the United States segregating the counts by model and model year:
- Consumer complaints, including those from fleet operators;
  - Field reports, including dealer field reports;
  - Reports involving a crash, injury, or fatality, based on claims against the manufacturer involving a death or injury, notices received by the manufacturer alleging or proving that a death or injury was caused by a possible defect in a subject vehicle, property damage claims, consumer complaints, or field reports;
  - Property damage claims; and
  - Third-party arbitration proceedings where Ford is or was a party to the arbitration; and
  - Lawsuits, both pending and closed, in which Ford is or was a defendant or codefendant.

For subparts "a" through "d" state the total number of each item (e.g., consumer complaints, field reports, etc.) separately. Multiple incidents involving the same vehicle are to be counted separately. Multiple reports of the same incident are also to be counted separately (i.e., a consumer complaint and a field report involving the same incident in which a crash occurred are to be counted as a crash report, a field report and a consumer complaint).

In addition, for items "c" through "f" provide a summary description of the alleged problem and causal and contributing factors and Ford's assessment of the problem, with a summary of the significant underlying facts and evidence. For items "e" and "f" identify the parties to the action, as well as the caption, court, docket number, and date on which the complaint or other document initiating the action was filed.

3. Separately, for each item (complaint, report, claim, notice, or matter) within the scope of your response to Request No. 2, state the following information:
- Ford's file number or other identifier used;
  - The category of the item, as identified in Request No. 3 (i.e., consumer complaint, field report, etc.);
  - Vehicle owner or fleet name (and fleet contact person);
  - Vehicle owner address,
  - Vehicle owner telephone number;
  - Vehicle's VIN;
  - Vehicle's make, model and model year;
  - Vehicle's engine model (cylinders, displacement, and Ford engine code);
  - Vehicle's transmission model;
  - Vehicle's mileage at time of incident;
  - Incident date;
  - Report or claim date;
  - Whether a crash is alleged;

- n. Whether a fire is alleged;
- o. Whether property damage is alleged;
- p. Number of alleged injuries, if any;
- q. Number of alleged fatalities, if any;
- r. Whether the item involves unintended vehicle movement while the vehicle is in park (or the vehicle is such that it is perceived by the driver as being in park), or difficulty shifting the steering column shift lever into the park position; and
- s. Whether the item is related to the Parking gear, Park Pawl and/or the Park Pawl linkage.

Provide this information in Microsoft Access 2003 or 2007, or a compatible format, entitled "REQUEST NUMBER TWO DATA." See Enclosure for a pre-formatted table which provides further details regarding this submission.

- 4. Produce copies of all documents related to each item within the scope of Request No. 2. Organize the documents separately by category (*i.e.*, consumer complaints, field reports, etc.) and describe the method Ford used for organizing the documents.
- 5. State, by model and model year, a total count for all of the following categories of claims, collectively, that have been paid by Ford to date that relate to, or may relate to, the alleged defect in **MY 2002-2005** Ford Explorer and Mercury Mountaineer, **2003-2005** Lincoln Aviator vehicles **MY 2001** and **MY 2006** Ford Explorer and Mercury Mountaineer, and **MY**: warranty claims; extended warranty claims; claims for good will services that were provided; field, zone, or similar adjustments and reimbursements; and warranty claims or repairs made in accordance with a procedure specified in a technical service bulletin or customer satisfaction campaign.

Separately, for each such claim, state the following information:

- a. Ford's claim number;
- b. Vehicle owner's or fleet name (and fleet contact person);
- c. Vehicle owner address;
- d. Vehicle owner telephone number;
- e. VIN;
- f. Model
- g. Model Year
- h. Vehicle's engine model (cylinders, displacement, and Ford engine code);
- i. Vehicle's transmission code;
- j. Repair date;
- k. Vehicle mileage at time of repair;
- l. Repairing dealer's or facility's name, telephone number, city and state or ZIP code;
- m. Labor operation number;
- n. Problem code;
- o. Replacement part number(s) and description(s);
- p. Concern stated by customer;
- q. Comment, if any, by dealer/technician relating to claim and/or repair; and
- r. Whether there was an assessment or comment by Ford. If there was, produce a copy of that assessment.

Provide this information in Microsoft Access 2003 or 2007, or a compatible format, entitled "WARRANTY DATA." See Enclosure for a pre-formatted table which provides further details regarding this submission.

6. Describe in detail the search criteria used by Ford to identify the claims identified in response to Request No. 5, including the labor operations, problem codes, part numbers and any other pertinent parameters used. Provide a list of all labor operations, labor operation descriptions, problem codes, and problem code descriptions applicable to the alleged defect in the subject vehicles. State, by make and model year, the terms of the new vehicle warranty coverage offered by Ford on the subject vehicles (*i.e.*, the number of months and mileage for which coverage is provided and the vehicle systems that are covered). Describe any extended warranty coverage option(s) that Ford offered for the subject vehicles and state by option, model, and model year, the number of vehicles that are covered under each such extended warranty.
7. Produce copies of all service, warranty, and other documents that relate to, or may relate to, the alleged defect in the subject vehicles, that Ford has issued to any dealers, regional or zone offices, field offices, fleet purchasers, or other entities. This includes, but is not limited to, bulletins, advisories, informational documents, training documents, or other documents or communications, with the exception of standard shop manuals. Also include the latest draft copy of any communication that Ford is planning to issue within the next 120 days.
8. Describe, and provide copies of all documents relating to, all internal communications within Ford that relate to the alleged defect in the subject vehicles. Provide a chronological summary of the communications and organize the documents accordingly.
9. Describe all assessments, analyses, tests, test results, studies, surveys, simulations, investigations, inquiries and/or evaluations (collectively, "actions") that relate to, or may relate to, the alleged defect in the subject vehicles that have been conducted, are being conducted, are planned, or are being planned by, or for, Ford. For each such action, provide the following information:
  - a. Action title or identifier;
  - b. The actual or planned start date;
  - c. The actual or expected end date;
  - d. Brief summary of the subject and objective of the action;
  - e. Engineering group(s)/supplier(s) responsible for designing and for conducting the action; and
  - f. A brief summary of the findings and/or conclusions resulting from the action.

For each action identified, provide copies of all documents related to the action, regardless of whether the documents are in interim, draft, or final form. Organize the documents chronologically by action.

10. Describe all modifications or changes made by, or on behalf of, Ford in the design, material composition, manufacture, quality control, supply, or installation of the subject component,

from the start of production to date, which relate to, or may relate to, the alleged defect in the subject vehicles. This includes, but is not limited to, changes between MY 2001 and MY 2002 and between MY 2005 and MY 2006 involving the brake shift interlock system, the BSI solenoid pin, the BSI solenoid pin interaction with the swing arm, or the park pawl, as well as running changes between MYs 2002, 2003, 2004, and 2005 on the BSI and transmission (including the park pawl). For each such modification or change, provide the following information with regard to the alleged defect and transmission assemblies:

- a. The date or approximate date on which the modification or change was incorporated into vehicle production;
- b. A detailed description of the modification or change;
- c. The reason(s) for the modification or change;
- d. The part number(s) (service and engineering) of the original component;
- e. The part number(s) (service and engineering) of the modified component;
- f. Whether the original unmodified component was withdrawn from production and/or sale, and if so, when;
- g. When the modified component was made available as a service component; and
- h. Whether the modified component can be interchanged with earlier production components.

Also, provide the above information for any modification or change that Ford is aware of which may be incorporated into vehicle production within the next 120 days.

11. Produce exemplar samples of each design version of the following components related to the park system of the subject vehicles:
  - a. Park gear;
  - b. Park Pawl (and Park Pawl linkages, springs);
  - c. Detent Spring;
  - d. Rooster Comb;
  - e. Manual Lever; and the
  - f. Transmission Shift Cable.
12. Produce warranty returns or field samples of the following:
  - a. Park Gear; and
  - b. Park Pawl Assemblies (Including the Park Pawl, linkages, springs, etc.);
13. For each of the alleged crashes noted in VOQs produce or state the following:
  - a. Whether Ford has done an inspection of the vehicle;
  - b. Ford's assessment of the causal or contributory factor(s) of the alleged crash;
  - c. Ford's assessment of the root cause(s) of the alleged crash;
  - d. Any reports, summaries, analyses, or presentations related to the alleged crash.
14. For each of the alleged crashes provided in Ford's response to request numbers 2 of this letter produce or state the following:
  - a. Whether Ford has done an inspection of the vehicle;
  - b. Ford's assessment of the causal or contributory factor(s) of the alleged crash;
  - c. Ford's assessment of the root cause(s) of the alleged crash;

- d. Any reports, summaries, analyses, or presentations related to the alleged crash.
15. For each of the alleged crashes provided in Ford's response to request number 5 of this letter produce or state the following:
    - a. Whether Ford has done an inspection of the vehicle;
    - b. Ford's assessment of the causal or contributory factor(s) of the alleged crash;
    - c. Ford's assessment of the root cause(s) of the alleged crash;
    - d. Any reports, summaries, analyses, or presentations related to the alleged crash.
  16. Describe, and provide copies of all documents relating to all communications between Ford and subject component suppliers that relate to the alleged defect in the subject vehicles. Provide a chronological summary of the communications and organize the documents accordingly.
  17. Provide a detailed technical assessment of potential unintended vehicle movement associated with the interaction of the Brake Shift Solenoid Pin and the Swing Arm issue with regards to a powered vs. non powered rollaway.
  18. Furnish Ford's assessment of the alleged defect in the subject vehicle, including:
    - a. The causal or contributory factor(s);
    - b. The failure mechanism(s);
    - c. The failure mode(s);
    - d. The risk to motor vehicle safety that it poses;
    - e. What warnings, if any, the operator and other persons both inside and outside the vehicle would have that the alleged defect was occurring or subject component was malfunctioning; and
    - f. The reports included with this inquiry.

This letter is being sent to Ford pursuant to 49 U.S.C. § 30166, which authorizes NHTSA to conduct any investigation that may be necessary to enforce Chapter 301 of Title 49 and to request reports and the production of things. It constitutes a new request for information. Ford's failure to respond promptly and fully to this letter could subject Ford to civil penalties pursuant to 49 U.S.C. § 30165 or lead to an action for injunctive relief pursuant to 49 U.S.C. § 30163. (Other remedies and sanctions are available as well.) Section 5(a) of the TREAD Act, codified at 49 U.S.C. § 30165(b), provides for civil penalties of up to \$6,000 per day, with a maximum of \$16,375,000 for a related series of violations, for failing or refusing to perform an act required under 49 U.S.C. § 30166. *See* 49 CFR 578.6 (as amended by 71 Fed. Reg. 28279 (May 16, 2006)). This includes failing to respond to ODI information requests.

If Ford cannot respond to any specific request or subpart(s) thereof, please state the reason why it is unable to do so. If on the basis of attorney-client, attorney work product, or other privilege, Ford does not submit one or more requested documents or items of information in response to this information request, Ford must provide a privilege log identifying each document or item withheld, and stating the date, subject or title, the name and position of the person(s) from, and the person(s) to whom it was sent, and the name and position of any other recipient (to include



all carbon copies or blind carbon copies), the nature of that information or material, and the basis for the claim of privilege and why that privilege applies.

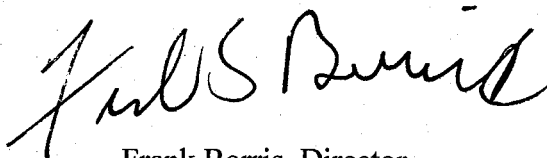
Ford's response to this letter, in duplicate, together with a copy of any confidentiality request, must be submitted to this office by **May 19, 2011**. **All business confidential information must be submitted directly to the Office of Chief Counsel as described in the following paragraph and should not be sent to this office.** In addition, do not submit any business confidential information in the body of the letter submitted to this office. Please refer to EA09-013 in Ford's response to this letter and in any confidentiality request submitted to the Office of Chief Counsel. If Ford finds that it is unable to provide all of the information requested within the time allotted, Ford must request an extension from me at (202) 366-5207 no later than five business days before the response due date. If Ford is unable to provide all of the information requested by the original deadline, it must submit a partial response by the original deadline with whatever information Ford then has available, even if an extension has been granted.

If Ford claims that any of the information or documents provided in response to this information request constitute confidential commercial material within the meaning of 5 U.S.C. § 552(b)(4), or are protected from disclosure pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 1905, Ford must submit supporting information together with the materials that are the subject of the confidentiality request, in accordance with 49 CFR Part 512, as amended, to the Office of Chief Counsel (NCC-111), National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Room W41-227, 1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E., Washington, D.C. 20590. Ford is required to **submit two copies of the documents containing allegedly confidential information (except only one copy of blueprints) and one copy of the documents from which information claimed to be confidential has been deleted.** Please remember that the word "CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS INFORMATION" must appear at the top of each page containing information claimed to be confidential, and the information must be clearly identified in accordance with 5 U.S.C. § 512.6. If you submit a request for confidentiality for all or part of your response to this IR, that is in an electronic format (e.g., CD-ROM), your request and associated submission must conform to the new requirements in NHTSA's Confidential Business Information Rule regarding submissions in electronic formats (49 CFR 512.6(c)). See Federal Register, volume 72, page 59434 (October 19, 2007).

Please send email notification to Derek Rinehardt ([derek.rinehardt@dot.gov](mailto:derek.rinehardt@dot.gov)) and to [ODI\\_IRresponse@dot.gov](mailto:ODI_IRresponse@dot.gov) when Ford sends its response to this office and indicate whether there is confidential information as part of Ford response.

If you have any technical questions concerning this matter, please call Derek Rinehardt of my staff at (202) 366-3642.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Frank Borris". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "F" and "B".

Frank Borris, Director  
Office of Defects Investigation  
Enforcement

Enclosure One (1) CD ROM titled EA09-013 containing four (4) files:

- (1) EA09-013 PRODUCTION DATA.accdb
- (2) EA09-013 REQUEST NUMBER DATA.accdb
- (3) EA09-013 WARRANTY DATA.accdb
- (4) EA09-013 Associated VOQs.pdf