U.S. Department of Transportation

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

ODI RESUME

OFFICE OF DEFECTS INVESTIGATION

NHTSA

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Investigation: PE 10-033
Date Opened: 08/23/2010
Date Closed: 07/15/2011
Investigator: Steve Mchenry
Reviewer: Jeff Quandt
Approver: Frank Borris
Subject: Engine Stalling

MANUFACTURER & PRODUCT INFORMATION

Manufacturer: FORD MOTOR COMPANY
Products: 2004 through 2007 Ford Freestar and Mercury Monterey
Population: 280,489

Problem Description: The engine may stall due to water entering the powertrain control module.

FAILURE REPORT SUMMARY

	ODI	Manufacturer	Total
Complaints:	55	334	350**
Crashes/Fires:	1	0	1
Injury Incidents:	0	0	0
Fatality Incidents:	0	0	0
Other*:	0	200	200

***Description of Other:** MY 2004 warranty claims of any type for engine stalling.

** Count indicates duplicate reports received by ODI and manufacturer.

ACTION / SUMMARY INFORMATION

Action: This Preliminary Evaluation is closed.

Summary:

The subject vehicles suffered from a design issue whereby water could run down onto the cowling under the hood and located in the area of the windshield wipers and then drip onto a computer module, the Powertrain Control Module (PCM), which could be manifested in a variety of symptoms depending on which part of the circuit board became wet or which of the connector pins shorted out. In addition to causing an engine to stall, which may or may not then restart, the water intrusion could also cause the transmission to shift poorly, the vehicle to have erratic power, a malfunction indicator light to come on, or result in an inability to start the vehicle, an inability to shift the vehicle into either forward or reverse. Also the problem could cause a higher than normal idle RPM in Park, or for the radio to malfunction, or the interior lights to stay on.

During this investigation ODI was concerned with the effect of the engine stalling or a drastic and sudden loss of power either of which may create a safety risk. In reviewing the actual number of these types of incidents, collectively referred to here as engine stalls, the number was found to be below what would be considered a defect trend. For example, the number of engine stalls identified in Ford's warranty claims for the model year (MY) 2004 subject vehicles, the MY with the most failures, was 200 out of population of 125,865, for a failure rate of 0.16%.

The one crash recorded by a complainant to NHTSA, VOQ 10311522, alleged that the engine stalled, due to water intrusion into the PCM, while the road was turning causing her to go off the road and according to the police report the vehicle then hit an embankment and a tree stump. Ford reported in their response that there were three alleged crashes but none of these were validated as being caused by a problem with water intrusion into the PCM causing a stall.

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 will continue to monitor complaints and other information relating to the alleged defect in the subject vehicles and take further action in the future if warranted.