U.S. Department of Transportation

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

ODI RESUME

OFFICE OF DEFECTS INVESTIGATION

NHTSA

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Investigation:	EA 10-003
Prompted by:	Consumer Complaint
Date Opened:	04/13/2010
Principal Investigator:	Bruce York-B
Subject:	HVAC Switch Failures

MANUFACTURER & PRODUCT INFORMATION

Manufacturer:	FORD MOTOR COMPANY
Products:	1997-2008 E350/450 Ford Cab/Chassis
Population:	1,076,975

Problem Description: The blower switch on certain ford E350/450 vehicles may overheat/melt and catch fire.

FAILURE REPORT SUMMARY

	ODI	Manufacturer	Total
Complaints:	1	55	56
Crashes/Fires:	1	55	56
Injury Incidents:	0	0	0
Fatality Incidents:	0	0	0
Other*:	182	0	182

***Description of Other:** Failures by 4 fleets where the blower motor switch melted, smoked, burned or experienced open flame.

ACTION / SUMMARY INFORMATION

Action: An engineering analysis has been opened.

Summary:

ODI has received 1 complaint and reports from 4 transportation fleets alleging 182 switch failures. Each fleet operates mini buses built on a Ford E350 or E450 cutaway chassis. The OEM HVAC blower switches have melted, smoked, burned or experienced open flame and become inoperable on vehicles in each fleet. Some drivers have reported a burning smell or smoke coming from the dash.

One fleet reported a vehicle fire. No injuries were sustained. However, the bus was carrying special needs children when the driver noticed smoke coming from the dash. The driver was able to evacuate the children prior to the vehicle becoming engulfed in flames.

The 55 fires referred to in the manufacturers column is based on the Early Warning Reporting definition of Fire, which is as follows: Fire means combustion or burning of material in or from a vehicle as evidenced by flame. The term also includes, but is not limited to, thermal events and fire-related phenomena such as smoke and melt, but does not include events and phenomena associated with a normally functioning vehicle such as combustion of fuel within an engine or exhaust from an engine.

This Engineering Analysis (EA) has been opened to determine if the blower motor switch failures create a situation where a vehicle fire is possible and presents a safety risk to the driver and other passengers.