U.S. Department of Transportation

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

OFFICE OF DEFECTS INVESTIGATION

ODI RESUME

Investigation: PE26008
Prompted By: VOQ and EWR Review
Date Opened: 11/06/2026
Investigator: Joseph Teitelman **Reviewer:** Ajit Alkondon
Approver: Tanya Topka
Subject: Burn Injuries From Side Airbag Deployment

MANUFACTURER & PRODUCT INFORMATION

Manufacturer: Ford Motor Company
Products: 2021-2026 Ford Explorer
Population: 1,236,155 (Estimated)

Problem Description: Deployment of the seat-mounted side airbag may result in serious burn injuries to front seat occupants.

FAILURE REPORT SUMMARY

	ODI	Manufacturer	EWR D&I	Other	Total	EWR Field Reports
All Incidents:	8	0	4	0	11*	0
Crashes/Fires:	8	0	4	0	11*	0
Injury Incidents:	7	0	4	0	10*	0
Number of Injuries:	7	0	4	0	10*	0
Fatality Incidents:	0	0	0	0	0	0

*Total eliminates duplicates received by the manufacturer

ACTION/SUMMARY INFORMATION

Action: Open a Preliminary Evaluation (PE)

Summary:

The Office of Defects Investigation (ODI) has received 8 Vehicle Owner Questionnaires (VOQs) and 4 Early Warning Reporting “Death and Injury” reports alleging burn injuries following side airbag deployment in model years 2021-2026 Ford Explorer vehicles. Consumers have described that during a crash involving deployment of the seat-mounted side airbag, they sustained burn injuries. Burn injuries have been reported for both drivers and front passengers and were typically diagnosed as second or third-degree burns requiring medical treatment. Some of the VOQs report injuries to law enforcement officers following side airbag deployments in Ford Explorer Police Interceptors.

ODI has opened this PE to evaluate the scope, frequency, and potential safety-related consequences of the alleged defect. To review the ODI reports cited in the Opening Resume ODI Report Identification Number document, go to NHTSA.gov.