00V-072 (01)

L. W. Camp
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Automotive Safety Office
Environmental And Safety Engineering

Ford Motor Company
330 Town Center Drive
Dearborn, Michigan 48126 USA

March 2, 2000

Mr. Kenneth Weinstein
Associate Administrator for Safety Assurance
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
400 Seventh Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Mr. Weinstein:

Pursuant to Part 573 of Title 49 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Defect and Noncompliance Reports, Ford Motor Company submits the following information concerning a recall action that it is initiating. Although Ford does not consider the subject of this action to be an unreasonable risk to motor vehicle safety, in order to avoid a protracted dispute with the agency, we will conduct this action as if it were safety related.

573.5 (c) (2)

Certain 1999 and 2000 model year Ford Explorer and Mercury Mountaineer vehicles built from Job #1 (September 14, 1998) through September 12, 1999 and equipped with 4.0L engines and All-time 4 Wheel Drive ("A4WD") powertrains. The affected vehicles were built at the Louisville Assembly Plant and the St. Louis Assembly Plant. Vehicles built during the recall period but repaired previously under Technical Service Bulletin 99-22-4 and are not included in the recall population.

Because these vehicles are not produced in Vehicle Identification Number ("VIN") order, information as to the applicability of this action to specific vehicles can best be obtained by either calling Ford's toll-free line (1-800-392-3673) or by contacting a local Ford or Lincoln/Mercury dealer, who can obtain specific

information regarding the vehicles from the Ford On-line Automotive Service Information System ("OASIS") database.

573.5 (c) (3)

208,903 vehicles.

573.5 (c) (4)

Unknown, but estimated to be less than one-half percent.

573.5 (c) (5)

The generic electronic module ("GEM") on the affected vehicles may experience a condition referred to as "lock-up" in which the GEM controlled electronic functions (e.g. front windshield wipers, interior lights, 4X4 system, etc.) could not be turned On or, in some cases if the function is On, it could not be turned Off. Importantly, the windshield wipers, or any other GEM controlled function, would not become inoperative if the lock-up occurred while those functions were in use. During this lock-up condition, these functions remain in their last known operating mode and do not respond to driver commands until electrical power is interrupted to the GEM. Power interruption such as removing the applicable fuse or disconnecting the battery will restore proper GEM operation. An inoperative front windshield wiper system could adversely affect driver visibility.

573.5 (c) (6)

Ford became aware of a few reports of potential GEM lock-up incidents in February, 1999 based on a comprehensive review of all GEM subsystem warranty claims Ford continued to monitor warranty data to identify any defect trend that may develop. Concurrent with a July, 1999 software change to GEM's sold as service parts, which addressed uncommanded front windshield wiper operation, a reset command was also added to the GEM software in the belief that it would eliminate the very few known instances where customers had reported repeated lock-up incidents. When it appeared that this reset command eliminated the potential for repeat lock-ups, Ford added the same feature to the GEM's used for production of the 2000 model year affected vehicles on September 12, 1999.

During Ford's preparation of responses to the agency's inquiry PE99-049, Ford began a more detailed investigation of this issue to identify root cause. Ford also purchased five customer vehicles that exhibited GEM lock-up symptoms and began testing these vehicles in October, 1999. Ford identified

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electronic noise (always present during normal vehicle operation) on a diagnostic communication circuit used by the GEM and other electronic modules as being the root cause for lock-up. Subsequent monitoring of field data led Ford to decide to recall the affected vehicles. A total of 240 owner/field/warranty reports have been received that may relate to this condition. Many of these reports relate to customer dissatisfaction (e.g. inoperative interior lights), none of the reports involve accidents or injuries. Only a few of the affected vehicles may experience lock-up as sensitivity to the electronic noise is a function of the combined effects of the five different electronic modules (e.g. GEM, anti-lock brake system module, A4WD module, etc.) connected to the diagnostic circuit.

573.5 (c) (8)

Ford will notify owners of record on or about April 15, 2000, to return their vehicles to dealers for installation of a resistor in the GEM circuit which prevents the electronic noise on the diagnostic link from affecting the GEM during vehicle operation.

573.5 (c) (9)

Ford does not plan to make a public statement regarding this action. Copies of the notification letters to dealers and owners from Ford Customer Service Division will be forwarded when they become available.

573.5 (c) (11)

Ford has assigned campaign number 00S04 to this action.

Very truly yours,

L. W. Camp

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