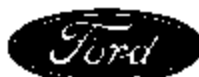


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OFFICE
DEFECTS INVESTIGATION

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

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

June 12, 2000

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

00V-157 (01)
001 - DRIVER side
002 - PASSENGER side

Dear Mr. Weinstein:

References: PE-200-990528 and CI-200-990528

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 compliance related equipment recall action that is being initiated. This action is being undertaken with respect to equipment and vehicles potentially affected by a June 9, 2000 equipment recall announced by TRW Vehicle Safety Systems, Inc. as to certain Service Stock Seat Belt Assemblies.

573.5 (c)(2)

The equipment involved is Service Stock Seat Belt Assemblies that were manufactured from June 1, 1998 through May 21, 2000. These Seat Belt Assemblies, Model Numbers: H 9977, H 9979, T 9083 and T 9217, are manufactured by TRW Vehicle Safety Systems, Inc. (TRW), Occupant Restraint Systems, 4505 West 26 Mile Road, Washington, Michigan 48094, (Telephone Number: (810) 781-7200) at their Reynosa, Mexico Production Plant. Some of these Seat Belt Assemblies may have been installed as service replacement equipment in certain 1998-2000 model year Ford Crown Victoria, Mercury Grand Marquis and Lincoln Town Car vehicles from January 1, 2000 through June 13, 2000.

573.5 (c)(3)

The number of affected Service Stock Seat Belt Assemblies sold by dealers is unknown. Approximately 3,500 vehicles are estimated to be involved in this action.

573.5 (c)(4)

Unknown.



573.5 (c)(5)

During routine compliance surveillance testing conducted at SGS U.S. Testing Co., Inc. (UST) for the NHTSA on May 28 and June 30, 1999 on 1999 model year Ford Crown Victoria Driver's Seat Belt Assemblies (model number H 9977) per FMVSS 209 (Seat Belt Assemblies) and NHTSA Test Procedure TP-209-3, one seat belt retractor that was tested relative to Section S4.3(j) of FMVSS 209 payed out more than 25mm of webbing on initial measurement during the 0.7g sensitivity lockup test (with ten subsequent retests as required by TP 209-3 providing complying results). TRW and Ford believe that this alleged non-compliance experienced at UST might be attributed to a larger than initially manufactured locking pawl to ratchet tooth (Pawl-to-Cam) gap and other factors. This condition may have been caused by the test sample seat belt retractors being stored from the time of manufacture (November 12, 1998) to the test period (approximately 6 months) in a webbing over-pack (packed webbing) condition prior to testing. This condition can result in excessive pressure being applied to internal retractor components thereby potentially resulting in a larger Pawl-to-Cam gap than that which existed at the time of manufacture. TRW studies have indicated that elimination of this packed webbing condition will alleviate the larger than manufactured Pawl-to-Cam gap over time. TRW and Ford believe that a larger than as manufactured Pawl-to-Cam gap that results from a long term webbing overpack storage condition may in part contribute to the possibility of the subject seat belt retractors not being able to fully meet the FMVSS 209 sensitivity lockup conditions. There remain unresolved issues involving UST FMVSS 209 test protocol that both TRW and Ford continue to believe impact negatively on the outcome of such testing. Although TRW and Ford believe that any potential non-compliance is inconsequential as it relates to motor vehicle safety, Ford has elected to conduct a recall of Seat Belt Assemblies sold by its dealers and to conduct a recall of vehicles that may have been serviced with these subject parts from January 1, 2000 through June 13, 2000. In addition, although the alleged non-compliance is limited to the driver's side seat belt assemblies, in an abundance of caution and to facilitate inventory control, TRW and Ford have elected to include the Right Front Passenger Side Service Stock Seat Belt Assemblies (Seat Belt Assembly Model Numbers H 9978, H 9980, T 9084, and T 9216) for the subject vehicles as well if these belts were replaced from January 1, 2000 through June 13, 2000.

573.5 (c)(7)

During routine compliance surveillance testing conducted at SGS U.S. Testing Co., Inc. (UST) for the NHTSA on May 28 and June 30, 1999 on 1999 model year Ford Crown Victoria Driver's Seat Belt Assemblies (model number H 9977) per FMVSS 209 (Seat Belt Assemblies) and NHTSA Test Procedure TP-209-3, one seat belt retractor that was tested relative to Section S4.3(j) of FMVSS 209 payed out more than 25mm of webbing on initial measurement during the 0.7g sensitivity lockup test (with ten subsequent retests as required by TP 209-3 providing complying results).

573.5 (c)(8)

Dealers will be instructed on or about the week of July 31, 2000 to contact purchasers of driver's and/or right front passenger's seat belt assemblies (manufactured from June 1, 1998 through May 21, 2000) that were sold by their Parts Departments from January 1, 2000 through June 13, 2000 for replacement of these seat belt assemblies with the new Service Stock Seat Belt Assemblies built with webbing shipping clips. VINs of the suspect population of vehicles in which the suspect Seat Belt Assemblies were installed are in the process of being identified through Ford's warranty and service records. Vehicles will be inspected and repaired if necessary at dealerships by replacing the Service Seat Belt Assemblies that were installed in these vehicles from January 1, 2000 through June 13, 2000 with new Service Stock Seat Belt Assemblies that have been manufactured by TRW with webbing shipping clips installed that eliminate the webbing overpack condition. It is currently anticipated that owner notification will occur on or about the week of July 31, 2000.

573.5 (c)(9)

Ford does not plan to make a public statement concerning this action. Notification letters will be sent to dealers and affected customers from the Ford Customer Service Division and copies will be forwarded to the agency on or about the week of July 31, 2000.

573.5 (c)(11)

Ford has assigned campaign number 00S15 to this action.

Very truly yours,



L. W. Camp