

Ford Motor Company

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OFFICE
DEFECTS INVESTIGATION

L. W. Camp, Director
Automotive Safety Office
Environmental and Safety Engineering

October 2, 2000

00V-292.001 (2)

Mr. Kenneth N. 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 have evidence that this condition presents an unreasonable risk to motor vehicle safety, for other reasons, Ford has decided to conduct this action as if it were safety-related.

573.5 (c) (2)

Certain 1999 and 2000 model year Mercury Villagers built at the Ohio Assembly Plant from September 18, 1998 through March 6, 2000.

Because these vehicles are not produced in 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 contacting a local Ford or Lincoln/Mercury dealer, who can obtain specific information regarding the vehicles from the Ford OASIS computer system.

573.5 (c) (3)

Approximately 67,200 vehicles.

573.5 (c) (4)

Unknown but believed to be less than 1%.



00V-292.001 (02)

573.5 (c) (5)

The subject vehicles may have one or more of the five bolts that mount the rack and pinion steering gear to the vehicle that were not torqued to specification. If several of the bolts loosen, there may be wander or looseness in the steering, which may be accompanied by noise or vibration that are overt to the driver. Ford believes that this condition is likely to be noticed by the vehicle operator and service will be sought. However, even if the warnings are ignored and all five bolts separate from the vehicle, there is still enough steering control to allow the vehicle to be brought to a safe stop.

573.5 (c) (6)

Ford first received a report of this condition during August 1999. Subsequent investigation, including an evaluation of vehicles on which bolts had been removed one at a time, concluded that the condition resulted in wander, looseness, and a vague feel to the steering and would cause the vehicle operator to seek service. The effect on vehicle handling was minimal. Even with three bolts removed and the remaining two loosened, the vehicle could be controlled. To date, Ford is aware of 18 reports of loose or missing rack and pinion steering gear mounting bolts, none of which were reported to have resulted in any accidents, injuries or fires.

573.5 (c) (8)

Ford will notify owners of record of the affected vehicles to return them to dealers for inspection and, if missing, replacement of the steering gear mounting bolts. In addition, all five of the mounting bolts will be tightened to the specified torque. It is currently anticipated that owner notification will occur on or before the week of October 30, 2000.

573.5 (c) (9)

Ford does not plan to make a public statement concerning this action. A copy of notification letters to dealers and owners from Ford Customer Service Division will be forwarded when available.

573.5 (c) (11)

Ford has assigned campaign number 00S33 to this action.

Sincerely,



L. W. Camp



NISSAN NORTH AMERICA, INC.

DOV-292.002 (01)


October 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:

We are transmitting the enclosed Defect Information Report in accordance with 49 CFR Part 573. A voluntary recall campaign will be initiated and your office provided with the notices. Nissan currently plans to initiate the campaign in late November, 2000.

Very truly,


Frank D. Slaveter
Corporate Manager,
Technical Compliance

Encl.

DEFECT INFORMATION REPORT**1. Manufacturer:**

Ford Motor Company, which manufactures Quest vehicles for Nissan.

2. Vehicles Potentially Involved:

1999 and 2000 model year Nissan Quest vehicles produced from September 18, 1998 to March 13, 2000. Vehicles produced during this period may have steering rack mounting bracket bolts that were not properly torqued during installation. Vehicles produced prior to and after this period, along with all other models, are not affected.

3. Total Number of Vehicles Potentially Involved:

Approximately 70,000 Quests.

4. Percentage of Vehicles Estimated to Actually Contain the Defect:

Unknown.

5. Description of the Defect:

The steering rack is retained by two brackets held in place by a total of five bolts. The mounting bracket bolts may not have been torqued to the proper specification. If several bolts loosen to the point of allowing freeplay in the mounting bracket(s), the vehicle operator may notice under hood noise and/or vibration through the steering wheel when hitting bumps and/or degradation in steering accuracy. However if these symptoms are not noticed or ignored, the steering rack may come loose to the point where difficulty in steering the vehicle may be experienced.

6. Chronology of Principal Events

January, 2000 – Nissan received the first report of the mounting bolts for the steering rack being loose.

February – August, 2000 – Nissan conducted an investigation to determine the cause and magnitude of the loose mounting bolts. Nissan's investigation determined that the steering rack mounting bolts on a number of the subject vehicles may not have been properly tightened during assembly.

September 25, 2000 - Nissan determined that a safety related defect may exist and therefore decided to conduct a voluntary recall campaign.

7. Description of Corrective Action:

All owners of potentially affected vehicles will be notified beginning November 13, 2000. The mailing will be completed by mid January, 2001. Owners will be requested to take their vehicle to a Nissan dealer for a check of steering rack mounting bolt torque. If the bolt torque is insufficient, new bolts will be installed.

8. Copy of Notices:

Copies of all notices will be provided to NHTSA as they become available.