

Ford Motor Company

01X-001

James P. Vondale, Director
Automotive Safety Office
Environmental & Safety Engineering

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June 1, 2001

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

Re: Tire Replacement Program 01B77 – Firestone Wilderness AT 15-, 16-,
and 17-inch Tire Replacement on Explorer, Explorer Sport, Mountaineer,
Sport Trac, Ranger, F-Series, Expedition, and Bronco Vehicles

Dear Mr. Weinstein:

This letter is to update you on Ford Motor Company's tire replacement program that we have discussed with the Agency on several occasions, and Susan Cischke, our Vice President for Environmental and Safety Engineering, summarized in a letter to Executive Director Shelton on May 22, 2001. We plan to begin mailing letters to owners on or about Monday June 4, 2001. The attachment to this letter provides additional details related to our implementation of this program that we believe will be useful to the Agency in responding to questions NHTSA is likely to receive from Ford customers. We hope you find this information helpful and if there are additional details you need on this program, please contact me.

Sincerely,

James P. Vondale

Attachment



Firestone Wilderness AT Tire Replacement Program

Ford is providing detailed information concerning a Firestone Wilderness AT tire replacement program that it is voluntarily initiating.

Potentially Affected Vehicles

The following is a listing of Ford vehicles that may be originally equipped with 15-, 16-, or 17-inch Firestone Wilderness AT tires:

Ranger

1995-2001	P215/75R15
1995-2000	P265/75R15
1996-2001	P235/75R15
1998-1999	P235/70R16
1999	P245/75R16

F-Series

1996-1997	P235/70R16
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Explorer/Explorer Sport/Mountaineer

1995-2001	P255/70R16
1996-2002	P235/75R15

Explorer Sport Trac

2001	P235/75R15
2000	P255/70R16

Expedition

1999-2001	P255/70R16
1999-2001	P265/70R17

Bronco

Not original equipment, but could have Wilderness AT tires from ATX recall.

Additionally, owners of vehicles with tires that may have been replaced with Wilderness AT tires under last year's Firestone tire recall will also be notified under this program.

Estimated Population of Vehicles Potentially Affected

Ford estimates that approximately 6,369,000 Ford Motor Company vehicles worldwide may be equipped with 15-, 16-, or 17-inch Firestone Wilderness AT tires. Approximately 5,926,000 Ford Motor Company vehicles in the U.S. may be equipped with the tires. The number of these tires currently estimated to be in use is 13,000,000.

Service Program

Given the large number of customers affected by this program, Ford is taking several extraordinary actions to replace this large number of tires as soon as possible. These actions include shutting down production at various assembly plants for several weeks, committing substantial resources to our tire suppliers to increase the production of replacement tires, and continuously testing potential replacement tires to increase the number of replacement tire options for our customers. Ford is notifying owners of record of affected vehicles to contact their dealers for replacement of any Firestone Wilderness AT tire on a Ford Motor Company vehicle. A copy of the owner letter is attached. It identifies the following options Ford is offering to its customers:

- To have their tires replaced, owners will be instructed to contact their Ford or Mercury dealer or an authorized tire retailer and request a service date for the Firestone Wilderness AT Tire Replacement Program. Owners with newer Firestone Wilderness AT tires (under three years) may be put on a waiting list, as older Wilderness AT tires will be replaced first.
- Because tires will be in short supply initially, Ford will offer refunds to owners who are (or were) unable to have their tires replaced at their Ford or Mercury dealer or an authorized tire retailer up to \$110 for each 15-inch tire and up to \$130 for each 16-inch or 17-inch tire.
- If owners replaced the Wilderness AT tires on their vehicles between August 1, 2000 and May 22, 2001 (due to concerns raised by the Firestone recall of certain Wilderness AT tires announced last August), Ford will offer a full refund with an original paid receipt. To receive this refund, owners will be advised to contact the Ford Tire Inquiry Hotline at 1-866-300-1226 or Ford Motor Company at www.ford.com for the required reimbursement form.

The owner letter also provides information on the following items to help owners identify the appropriate replacement tires, and properly maintain their tires:

- Our technical team has worked with leading tire suppliers to qualify tires approved for use as replacement tires. A copy of the current list of approved replacement tires is attached. As more tires are approved, the list will be updated to provide customers with more options and allow us to replace tires faster. This list will be attached to the owner letter and is available at any Ford or Lincoln Mercury dealer or at our website www.ford.com.
- Owners will also be informed that they can help to further minimize the potential for any type of tire failure by keeping tires properly inflated to the recommended pressure, avoiding overloading their vehicles and observing posted speeds.

Press Statements and Owner Letters

Ford plans to begin mailing the owner letter, which was reviewed with the Agency, on or about Monday June 4, 2001. Ford plans to provide follow-up mailings to encourage owners to complete this program. We will review those additional mailings with the Agency before sending them.

Ford officials announced the decision to conduct this tire replacement program at a press conference on May 22, 2001. Additionally, Ford has run full-page announcements in various national newspapers to help inform customers about the scope of this tire replacement program.

In order to keep the Agency fully informed about the progress of this action, Ford will be submitting on a voluntary basis, quarterly completion rate reports to the Agency similar to those required under 49 C.F.R. section 573.6.

Ford is committed to disposing of tires replaced in this program in an environmentally responsible manner. We also are exploring opportunities to best assist dealers in destroying these tires so they cannot be reused.

Program Number

Ford has assigned tire replacement program number 01B77 to this action.