

Automotive Safety Office
Environmental and Safety Engineering

November 3, 2003

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:

Subject: Ford Recall No. 03S08 – Certain 1996-2003 Model Year Ford Crown Victoria
Natural Gas Vehicles (NGV).

Summary

- Ford Action – Ford is conducting a voluntary safety recall involving certain 1996-2003 model year Ford Crown Victoria NGVs to install an insulator behind the rear seat.
- Number of Vehicles Involved – Approximately 4,218 vehicles in the United States and Canada.
- Affect on Vehicle Operation – In the very rare and unlikely circumstance of a vehicle interior fire in which a flame becomes locally directed at the natural gas tank located immediately behind the rear seat back, the natural gas fuel tank strength could be reduced, potentially resulting in a tank rupture.
- Service Procedure – Owners will be instructed to take their vehicles to Ford dealers to have an insulator installed behind the seat.

Attached is the detailed information required by the applicable portions of
49 CFR Part 573 – Defect and Non-Compliance Information Report.

Sincerely,


James P. Vondale



49 CFR Part 573 – DEFECT INFORMATION REPORT
03S08 – 1998-2003 MODEL YEAR FORD CROWN VICTORIA NATURAL GAS VEHICLES

Pursuant to Part 573 of Title 49 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Defect and Noncompliance Reports, Ford Motor Company (Ford) submits the following information concerning a safety recall action that it is voluntarily initiating.

573.6 (c) (2) – Potentially Affected Vehicles

Certain 1998-2003 model year Crown Victoria natural gas vehicles (NGV).

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 by contacting a local Ford dealer who can obtain specific information regarding the vehicles from the Ford On-line Automotive Service Information System (OASIS) database.

573.6 (c) (3) – Estimated Population of Vehicles Potentially Affected

Approximately 4,218 vehicles in the United States and Canada.

573.6 (c) (4) – Estimated Percentage of Affected Vehicles with the Condition

Unknown.

573.6 (c) (5) – Description of Defect

In the very rare circumstance that a flame from a vehicle interior fire becomes locally directed at the natural gas fuel tank located immediately behind the rear seat, the locally directed flame could damage the fiberglass wrap on the tank thereby reducing the hoop strength of the tank. If the hoop strength is significantly compromised, the tank could rupture.

573.6 (c) (6) – Chronology of Events

On October 1, 2002 the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration opened an investigation related to an incident, which occurred on September 24, 2002 involving alleged rupture of a 1998 Crown Victoria NGV fuel tank. Ford and NHTSA jointly investigated the incident and concluded that the incident under investigation was likely caused by a locally directed flame from a fire in the vehicle interior, which may have reduced the hoop strength of the natural gas fuel tank located immediately behind the rear seat. Analysis performed by Ford and NHTSA found that the natural gas tank met current performance standards and, when tested in the laboratory, the pressure relief valve performed as expected. While this event appears to be an isolated and unique event, Ford has developed an insulator to insulate the natural gas fuel tank from a locally directed flame from the interior of the vehicle.

573.6 (c) (8) Service Program

Owners will be notified and instructed to take their vehicles to a Ford dealer to have an insulator installed behind the current seat back.

There will be no charge to owners for this service. Mailing of owner notification letters will begin January 8, 2004 and be completed by January 8, 2004. Ford's general reimbursement plan for the cost of remedies paid for by vehicle owners prior to notification of a compliance/safety recall was provided to the agency on February 28, 2003.

573.6 (c) (9) -- Press statement and Dealer/Owner Letters

Due to the limited volume of vehicles, Ford does not plan to make a public statement concerning the subject matter of this action. A copy of the Notification letters to dealers and owners from Ford will be forwarded when available.

573.6 (c) (11) -- Recall Number

Ford has assigned recall number 03S08 to this action.

573.13 (c) (2) -- Ending Date for Reimbursement Eligibility

The ending date for reimbursement eligibility for cost of remedies paid for by vehicle owners per Ford's general reimbursement plan is January 21, 2004.