

Ford Motor Company

04V-105 ① of ③

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

March 1, 2004

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

RECEIVED
NHTSA-215
2004 MAR -2 A 11:42
OFFICE OF
DEFECTS INVESTIGATION

Dear Mr. Weinstein:

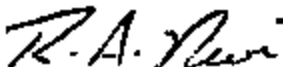
Subject: Ford Recall No. 04S11 – Certain 2003 Model Year Ford Taurus / Mercury Sable Vehicles – Air Induction System Damage

Summary

- **Ford Action** – Ford is conducting a voluntary safety recall involving certain 2003 model year Ford Taurus and Mercury Sable vehicles, to replace air filter elements.
- **Number of Vehicles Involved** – Approximately 399,926 Ford Taurus and Mercury Sable vehicles in the United States and Federal Territories.
- **Affect on Vehicle Operation** – Ford's investigation found that the process used to manufacture the air filter paper was altered during the 2003 model year production, which resulted in an air filter paper element that can smolder or burn. This change in filter paper composition combined with the relatively short and straight air induction system employed in 2003 model year Ford Taurus and Mercury Sable vehicles, under certain circumstances, may allow hot carbon debris to be transported to the air filter element during a backflow event. These hot particles may ignite the air filter element with the potential for air induction system damage and/or underhood fire.
- **Service Procedure** – Ford has notified dealers to not demonstrate or deliver the affected vehicles until the service procedure has been performed. Owners will be notified and instructed to take their vehicles to a Ford or Lincoln-Mercury dealer to have the air filter element replaced.

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

Kob/ab

Fairlane Plaza South
330 Town Center Drive, Dearborn, Michigan 48126-2738 USA



49 CFR Part 573 – DEFECT INFORMATION REPORT
04S11 – 2003 MODEL YEAR FORD TAURUS AND MERCURY SABLE 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 initiating voluntarily.

04V-105 ② at ③

573.6 (c) (2) – Potentially Affected Vehicles

The vehicles potentially affected are certain 2003 model year Ford Taurus and Mercury Sable vehicles built between April 16, 2002 and August 1, 2003 at the Atlanta Assembly Plant and vehicles built between April 29, 2002 and September 18, 2003 at the Chicago Assembly Plant.

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 399,926 Ford Taurus and Mercury Sable vehicles in the United States and Federal Territories.

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

Unknown.

573.6 (c) (5) – Description of Defect

Ford's investigation found that the process used to manufacture the air filter paper was altered during the 2003 model year production, which resulted in an air filter paper element that can smolder or burn. This change in filter paper composition combined with the relatively short and straight air induction system employed in 2003 model year Ford Taurus and Mercury Sable vehicles, under certain circumstances, may allow hot carbon debris to be transported to the air filter element during a backflow event. These hot particles may ignite the air filter element with the potential for air induction system damage and/or underhood fire.

There have been no accidents and one alleged minor injury attributed to this issue.

573.6 (c) (6) – Chronology of Events

As of February 11, 2004, Ford received sixty-five (65) reports alleging underhood fires on 2003 model year Taurus and Sable vehicles. The alleged underhood fires involve components contained within the air induction system and the intake manifold. The alleged incidents include reports of relatively minor air induction system damage and some non-repairable vehicle damage. All reports involve alleged damage to the air filter.

Ford's investigation found that the process used to manufacture the air filter paper was altered during the 2003 model year production. Testing has shown that this resulted in an air filter paper element that is susceptible to smolder or burning if subjected to engine backflow and/or backfire events that may deposit hot carbon debris on the air filter in the air induction system configuration employed in the affected vehicles.

Additionally, testing has shown that the prior air filter and aftermarket replacement filters are not susceptible to these conditions.

573.6 (c) (8) – Service Program

Ford has notified dealers to not demonstrate or deliver the affected vehicles until the service procedure has been performed. Owners will be notified and instructed to take their vehicles to a Ford or Lincoln-Mercury dealer to have the air filter element replaced.

There will be no charge to owners for this service. Mailing of owner notification letters will begin and be completed on March 10, 2004.

In accordance with Part 573.13 (d)(1), Ford is excluding reimbursement for costs incurred by owners for repair of this problem as Ford's original warranty program would have provided for a free repair of the problem.

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

Ford does not at this time plan to make a statement to the media concerning the subject matter of this action. A copy of the Notification letters to dealers and owners from Ford will be forwarded to the agency when available.

573.6 (c) (11) – Recall Number

Ford has assigned recall number 04S11 to this action.