Ford Motor Company

04V-332
(3 pages)

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

July 6, 2004

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

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Dear Mr. Weinstein:

Subject: Ford Recall No. 04S17 – Certain 1999-2001 Model Year Ford Taurus and Mercury Sable Vehicles Front Suspension Coil Spring

Summary

- Ford Action - Ford is conducting a voluntary safety recall in certain high corrosion states to install protective spring shields on affected vehicles to prevent a fractured spring from moving past the spring seat. There have been no reported accidents or injuries attributed to this concern.

- Number of Vehicles Involved – Approximately 899,060 total vehicles currently registered in the states of Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wisconsin.

- Affect on Vehicle Operation -The front coil springs may fracture as a result of corrosion in high corrosion states. The potential for corrosion causing a spring fracture increases with the number of miles and years in service on the vehicle. There is a potential for a fractured spring to move past the spring seat and contact a front tire. Some tires have deflated due to contact with a broken spring. There have been no reported accidents or injuries attributed to this concern.

- Service Procedure – Owners will be instructed to take their vehicles to a Ford or Lincoln-Mercury dealer to have the protective spring shields installed.

As field data has repeatedly demonstrated, a spring fracture does not pose a risk to motor vehicle safety. However, in order to address the agency's concern and to respond to any customer concerns, Ford is voluntarily taking this action as a safety recall. 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
Attachment

ATTACHMENT

49 CFR Part 573 - DEFECT INFORMATION REPORT
04S17 – 1999-2001 MODEL YEAR FORD TAURUS
and MERCURY SABLE VEHICLES FRONT SUSPENSION COIL SPRING

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.

573.6 (c) (2) - Potentially Affected Vehicles

The vehicles potentially affected are all 1999 through 2001 model year Taurus and Sable vehicles built at the Chicago Assembly Plant from April 15,1998 through August 13, 2001 and at the Atlanta Assembly Plant from March 23,1998 through July 27, 2001 and currently registered in the states of Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wisconsin.

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 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 899,060 vehicles in these high corrosion areas of the United States and Federal Territories.

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

The approximate failure rate projected for vehicles in these states at 150,000 miles of service is 2 percent.

573.6 (c) (5) - Description of the Defect.

The front coil springs may fracture as a result of corrosion in high corrosion states. The potential for corrosion causing a spring fracture increases with the number of miles and years in service on the vehicle. There is a limited potential for a fractured spring to move past the spring seat and contact a front tire. Some tires have deflated due to contact with a broken spring. There have been no reported accidents or injuries attributed to this concern.

As indicated by the information below, this issue is limited to those states in the high corrosion region of the United States. Vehicles in these high corrosion states account for 99% of the alleged front coil spring fractures even though they represent 62% of the vehicle population. The following number of non-duplicative allegations were located in a search of Ford's owner report, field report and warranty databases in these states:

HIGH CORROSION STATES			
Model Year	Total Fractures Alleged	Also Allege Tire Contact	Approximate Vehicle Volume
1999	459	295	328,923
2000	427	300	279,987
2001	120	74	290,150
Total	1006	669	899,060

REMAINING STATES			
Model Year	Total Fractures Alleged	Also Allege Tire Contact	Approximate Vehicle Volume
1999	3	0	222,825
2000	6	4	166,206
2001	5	3	163,509
Total	14	7	552,540

573.6 (c) (6) - Chronology of Events

In January 2004 Ford's Enhanced Concern Identification activity noted an unusually high number of reported coil spring fractures and forwarded this information to the responsible engineering activity for analysis. In May 2004, Ford completed a comprehensive search for, and review of, potentially related allegations that identified the above owner and field reports and warranty claims. NHTSA opened an investigation on May 24, 2004 based on 82 reported spring fractures on 1999 through 2000 model year Taurus and Sable vehicles in high corrosion states. The engineering analysis and field data were reviewed at the Field Review Committee meeting on June 28, 2004 and it was determined that a safety recall would be conducted, even though none of the reports allege an accident or injury. As the agency is aware, Ford has not considered the issue to present an unreasonable risk to safety. Owners are able to safely control a vehicle that has experienced a fractured spring, even if there has been tire contact. Nonetheless, we have decided to conduct a safety recall for these vehicles, which are expected to have a notable number of fractures in the future.

573.6 (c) (8) - Service Program

Owners of the affected vehicles will be instructed to take their vehicles to a Ford or Lincoln-Mercury dealer for the installation of the protective spring shields.

There will be no charge to owners for this service. Ford anticipates that mailing of owner notification letters will begin the week of August 2, 2004 and be completed on August 13, 2004. Reimbursement for the cost of remedies for fractured front coil springs will be paid under an extended warranty coverage program as described in section 573.6 (c) (11) below.

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

Ford does not at this time plan to release 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 campaign number 04S17 to this action. In addition, Ford will notify nationwide all 1999-2001 model year Taurus and Sable owners of a customer satisfaction program (04M04) in which Ford will provide additional warranty coverage for replacement of fractured front coil springs for 10 years from original date of sale of a vehicle, or up to 150,000 total vehicle miles, which ever comes first. The 04M04 program will provide future front coil spring warranty coverage, including any incidental fractures that may occur outside the high corrosion states, and provide reimbursement for the cost of remedies previously paid by customers.

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

Not applicable for this safety program. Reimbursement will be offered under 04M04.