

Ford Motor Company

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

September 9, 2004

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:

Subject: Ford Recall No. 04S24 - Replacement of front hubs, rotors and wheel bearings on certain 2004 model year Ford Freestar and Mercury Monterey vehicles.

Summary

- Ford Action - Ford Motor Company (Ford) is conducting a voluntary safety recall involving certain 2004 model year Ford Freestar and Mercury Monterey vehicles to replace the front hubs, rotors and wheel bearings.
- Number of Vehicles Involved - Approximately 34,013 vehicles in the United States and Federalized Territories.
- Affect on Vehicle Operation - The second tier supplier of the front hubs changed the heat-treating process used to harden the wheel bearing raceway surface in the hub. As a result of this change a small circumferential crack (typically .4mm to 1.8mm deep) may occur in the hub due to overheating and/or the quenching process. Testing revealed that the crack propagated but did not produce any hub separations. Ford has not identified any field reports, warranty claims, accidents or injuries attributable to this condition. Although Ford does not have an indication that the hubs will separate in service, in an abundance of caution, Ford is conducting a voluntary program to replace the left and right front hubs, rotors and wheel bearings in the affected vehicles.

There have been no field reports or warranty claims related to this condition on vehicles in service.

- Service Procedure - Owners will be instructed to take their vehicles to a Ford or Lincoln-Mercury dealer to have the left and right front rotors and wheel bearings 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

Attachment

RECEIVED
2004 SEP 13 P 12:06
OFFICE OF DEFECTS
INVESTIGATION
04V-446
(3 pages)



49 CFR Part 573 - DEFECT INFORMATION REPORT
04S24 - 2004 MODEL YEAR FORD FREESTAR AND MERCURY MONTEREY 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

Vehicles potentially affected are 2004 model year Ford Freestar and Mercury Monterey vehicles built at the Oakville Assembly Plant from February 23, 2004 through May 13, 2004, as identified by specific VIN numbers.

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 (1-800-392-3873) 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 34,013 vehicles in the United States and Federalized Territories.

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

Unknown

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

The second tier supplier of the front hubs changed the heat-treating process used to harden the wheel bearing raceway surface on these parts. As a result of this change, a small circumferential crack (typically .4mm to 1.6mm deep) may occur in the hub due to overheating by the induction coil and/or the quenching process. Testing of hubs with these small circumferential cracks revealed that the cracks propagated but did not produce any hub separations. Ford has not identified any field reports, warranty claims, accidents, or injuries attributed to this condition.

573.6 (c) (6) - Chronology of Events

On May 18, 2004 the Ford Critical Concern Review Group was notified that certain front hubs that were installed on the subject vehicles may have been produced with small circumferential cracks. Subsequent laboratory testing conducted by the second tier supplier of the front hubs revealed that the cracks had propagated. A review of the supplier production data identified changes that occurred on February 23, 2004 to the induction coil heat-treating process that may produce the circumferential crack. On May 13, 2004, the supplier modified the heat-treating and quenching processes to correct this condition. A review of hubs from the suspect population

was conducted and approximately 63% contained a circumferential crack. Searches of field performance data located no reports or warranty claims related to this issue. Accordingly, there are no-known accidents or injuries attributed to this condition.

573.6 (c) (8) - Service Program

Dealers will be instructed to replace the front hub, rotors, and wheel bearings on the affected vehicles. There will be no charge to owners for this service. Mailing of owner notification letters will begin September 20, 2004 and be completed on September 20, 2004.

Ford's general reimbursement plan for the cost of remedies paid for by vehicle owners prior to notification of a safety recall was provided to the agency on February 28, 2003.

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 04S24 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 prior to September 30, 2004.