

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

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



Subject: Ford Recall No. 05S27 – Certain 2000-2002 Model Year Ford Focus Four and Five Door Vehicles – Rear Door Latches

Summary

- Ford Action – Ford is conducting a voluntary safety recall in certain high-corrosion states on certain 2000-2002 model year Ford Focus four and five door vehicles, to inspect and, depending on the condition of the latch, either clean and lubricate or replace the rear door latches.
- Number of Vehicles Involved – Approximately 358,857 vehicles originally sold or currently registered in Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wisconsin, and the District of Columbia.
- Affect on Vehicle Operation – Rear door latches on 2000-2002 model year four and five door Ford Focus vehicles in recognized high-corrosion states may experience corrosion in the pawl pivot area. The customer may experience difficulty opening or closing a rear door, and eventually the rear door may not latch properly. If not latched properly the door may open while the vehicle is in motion.
- Service Procedure – Owners will be instructed to take their vehicles to a Ford or Lincoln-Mercury dealer to have a lower rocker seal added to the door and to have the rear door latches evaluated. A latch that passes the evaluation will be lubricated to prevent future corrosion. A latch that does not pass the evaluation will be replaced at no cost to the customer.

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



49 CFR Part 573 -- DEFECT INFORMATION REPORT
05S27 -- CERTAIN 2000-2002 MODEL YEAR FORD FOCUS
FOUR AND FIVE DOOR VEHICLES -- REAR DOOR LATCHES

Pursuant to Part 573 of Title 49 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Defect and Noncompliance Reports, Ford Motor Company 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 2000-2002 model year Ford Focus four and five door vehicles originally sold or currently registered in certain high-corrosion states and built at the Wayne Assembly Plant from April 7, 1999 through August 13, 2002, and at the Hermosillo Assembly Plant from May 23, 2001 through September 2, 2002 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 (1-800-392-3673) or by contacting a local Ford or Lincoln-Mercury 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 358,857 vehicles in the United States and Federalized Territories.

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

Any vehicle that is subjected to long term use in the corrosive environment that may be encountered in the traditional high-corrosion states without adequate lubrication service may experience the condition.

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

Ford's analysis indicates that a build up of corrosion at the pawl pivot area of the latch can cause a binding condition of the pawl that may affect proper engagement of the pawl into the catch. The customer may experience difficulty opening or closing a rear door, and eventually the rear door may not latch properly. If not latched properly the door may open while the vehicle is in motion. Analysis of data and review of latches from vehicles has shown that the condition occurs only on vehicles subject to long-term exposure to a corrosive environment. Vehicles experiencing this condition were originally sold or currently registered in high-corrosion states.

The presence of corrosion in the latch results from two factors in combination as follows:

1. The primary rear door seals allow contamination to enter the door margin at the lower rocker seal and deposit on the latch.
2. The plating (hexavalent chrome) of the components of the latch does not provide adequate protection in the recognized corrosion areas of North America and Canada. During vehicle operation, contamination (water and salt) deposits on the latch components, creating a corrosive "paste." The paste does not wash through the latch, but remains and corrosively attacks the surfaces of the latch components.

As of November 5, 2004, Ford had received one allegation of a minor injury - a sprained wrist - that occurred when a door opened unexpectedly while leaving a parking space at low speed. No accidents have been reported due to this condition.

573.6 (c) (6) -- Chronology of Events

In April 2004, NHTSA opened a Preliminary Evaluation investigation (PE04-033) into allegations that one or both of the rear door latches do not latch, resulting in unintended opening of the rear doors on 2000 model year Ford Focus Vehicles. Ford's June 11, 2004 response to the agency's PE information request provided 37 reports alleging unintended rear door opening and one allegation of a minor injury - a sprained wrist.

In September 2004, NHTSA upgraded its investigation to an Engineering Analysis (EA04-023) concerning allegations of any failure, malfunction or otherwise unsatisfactory performance of the door latches of the rear passenger doors on 2000-2005 model year Ford Focus vehicles. Ford's November 5, 2004 response to the agency's EA information request provided 62 additional reports alleging unintended rear door opening while a vehicle was in motion. As a result of Ford's investigation during and subsequent to the EA response, Ford engineers reviewed parts obtained from customers who had submitted Vehicle Owner Questionnaires and additional field return parts. Component analysis and laboratory testing determined that corrosion in the pawl pivot area could affect the ability of the pawl to engage the catch. Vehicles experiencing this condition were currently registered or originally sold in high-corrosion states. The customer will experience difficulty opening or closing the rear door and eventually the rear door may not latch properly, creating the potential for the door to open while the vehicle is in motion.

573.6 (c) (8) -- Service Program

Owners of vehicles originally sold or currently registered in Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wisconsin will be instructed to take their vehicles to a Ford or Lincoln-Mercury dealer to have a lower rocker seal added to the door and to have the rear door latches evaluated. A latch that passes the evaluation will be lubricated to prevent future corrosion. A latch that does not pass the evaluation will be replaced at no cost to the customer. In addition, a sticker will be affixed to the rear doors advising the customer to use Ford recommended lubricants. There will be no charge to owners for this service.

Mailing of owner notification letters will begin on March 1, 2005 and be completed on or before March 22, 2005. 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 05S27 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 April 1, 2005.