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September 29, 2006

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

06V-382  
(3 pages)

Dear Mr. Smith:

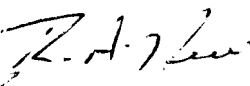
Subject: Ford Recall No. 06S44 - Certain 2006 Model Year Front-Wheel Drive Escape Hybrid Vehicles

Summary

- Ford Action – Ford is conducting a voluntary safety recall involving certain 2006 model year front-wheel drive Ford Escape Hybrid vehicles to inspect the drivetrain intermediate shaft and replace if necessary.
- Number of Vehicles Involved - Ford estimates that there are approximately 6,164 affected vehicles currently registered in the United States and Federalized Territories.
- Affect on Vehicle Operation - The intermediate shaft installed in these vehicles may not have been properly heat treated and may fracture while the vehicle is being driven. If a fracture occurs the powertrain will lose the ability to transmit torque to the drive wheels and the transmission will not hold the vehicle stationary when placed in the Park position. The power steering, service brakes, and parking brakes are not affected by this condition. Although Ford has not identified an unreasonable risk of accident or injury associated with this issue, we are conducting this action as a safety recall to avoid a protracted discussion with the agency. There are no reports alleging any accidents or injuries.
- Service Procedure - Owners will be instructed to return their vehicles to the dealership for an inspection of the intermediate shaft production date code and replacement of the intermediate shaft, if appropriate.

Attached is the detailed information required by the applicable portions of 49 CFR Part 573 - Defect and Noncompliance Report.

Sincerely,

  
James P. Vondale  
Attachment



On July 11, 2006, the issue was reviewed in the Critical Concern Review Group (CCRG) and on August 11, 2006, a Technical Review meeting was held. A subsequent review of field and warranty data found three additional incidents involving taxi fleet vehicles that involved intermediate shaft fractures. On September 8, 2006, a Technical Review meeting was held to review all data and recommended that a field action be performed to address this concern. On September 22, 2006, the Field Review Committee approved safety recall 06S44 to address this issue.

Escape Hybrids equipped with All-Wheel-Drive powertrains or non-hybrid Escape vehicles utilize different intermediate shaft designs and are not affected by this concern.

573.6 (c) (8) - Service Program

Owners will be instructed to return their vehicles to the dealership for an inspection of the intermediate shaft production date and replacement, if appropriate. There will be no charge to owners for this service. Mailing of owner notification letters will begin during the week of October 23, 2006.

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

Ford does not 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 06S44 to this action.

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

Ford's general reimbursement plan for the cost of remedies paid for by vehicle owners prior to a safety recall was provided to the agency on February 28, 2005. The ending date for reimbursement eligibility for remedies paid for by vehicle owners per Ford's general reimbursement plan is November 10, 2006.

49 CFR Part 573 - DEFECT INFORMATION REPORT  
Ford Recall No. 06S44 - Certain 2006 Model Year Front-Wheel  
Drive Ford Escape Hybrid Vehicles

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 certain 2006 model year front-wheel drive (FWD) Ford Escape Hybrid vehicles (subject vehicles) built from July 28, 2005, through April 21, 2006.

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

Ford estimates that there are approximately 6,164 vehicles currently registered 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 supplier did not properly heat treat the intermediate shaft used in the subject vehicles. As a result, the intermediate shaft may fracture while the vehicle is being driven. If a fracture occurs the powertrain will lose the ability to transmit torque to the drive wheels and the transmission will not hold the vehicle stationary when placed in the Park position. The power steering, service brakes, and parking brakes are not affected by this condition. There are no reports alleging any accidents or injuries.

573.6 (c) (6) - Chronology of Events

On March 6, 2006, Ford identified an intermediate shaft fracture on a 2006 model year Hybrid Escape operating as a taxi cab. The fractured intermediate shaft was sent to the supplier for analysis to determine root cause. In April 2006, warranty analysis identified two additional warranty claims involving intermediate shaft repairs on subject vehicles also used as taxi cabs. Ford continued to analyze returned parts and assess potential causes of the fractures with the supplier.

On June 29, 2006 Ford's Enhanced Concern Identification activity identified a total of 14 reports (12 warranty claims and two field reports) involving intermediate shaft fractures on nine Hybrid Escapes all of which were being operated as taxi cabs in New York City or San Francisco. In all cases the vehicles required towing services and there were no allegations of accidents or injuries.