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

06V-383
5 pages

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06V-383
(5 pages)

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

Dear Mr. Smith:

Subject: Ford Recall No. 06S45 - 2005 Model Year Ford Freestyle, Ford Five Hundred, and Mercury Montego Vehicles, and Certain 2006 Model Year Ford Freestyle Vehicles

Summary

- Ford Action - Ford is conducting a voluntary safety recall involving 2005 model year Ford Freestyle, Ford Five Hundred, and Mercury Montego vehicles and certain 2006 model year Ford Freestyle vehicles. The 2005 model year vehicles will have a water shield installed on the front latches and the front and rear latches will be lubricated. In addition, all of the Freestyle vehicles will have the rear window trim molding modified to prevent water leakage. In conjunction with this safety field action, Ford will also conduct a regional program (06R13) to address affected vehicles in warmer climates. The repair procedures will be identical.
- Number of Vehicles Involved - Ford estimates that there are approximately 139,537 affected vehicles currently registered in the following states that will be part of this safety recall:

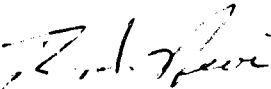
Alaska	Iowa	Michigan	New Jersey	South Dakota
Colorado	Kansas	Minnesota	New York	Utah
Connecticut	Kentucky	Missouri	North Dakota	Vermont
Delaware	Maine	Montana	Ohio	West Virginia
Idaho	Maryland	Nebraska	Pennsylvania	Wisconsin
Illinois	Massachusetts	New Hampshire	Rhode Island	Wyoming
Indiana				
- Affect on Vehicle Operation - The front and rear side door latch mechanisms may experience water intrusion that may wash out grease applied during the manufacturing process. This condition may allow the latch mechanism to freeze during temperatures significantly below freezing in combination with a wet environment. As a result, the door latch pawl may not return to the latched position when the door is closed. There are no reports alleging accidents, injuries, or loss of property.



- Service Procedure - Owners will be instructed to return their vehicles to the dealership for:
1) The installation of a water shield over the front latches; 2) Sealing of a drain hole in the rear window trim molding on Freestyle rear side doors; and 3) Application of grease to all front and rear side-door latch mechanisms on the affected vehicles.

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

Sincerely,



James P. Vondale

Attachment

49 CFR Part 573 - DEFECT INFORMATION REPORT
Ford Recall No. 06S45 - 2005 Model Year Ford Freestyle, Five Hundred, and
Mercury Montego Vehicles, and Certain 2006 Model Year Ford Freestyle 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 2005 model year Ford Freestyle, Ford Five Hundred, and Mercury Montego vehicles built from February 16, 2004, through June 20, 2005, and certain 2006 model year Ford Freestyle vehicles built from March 30, 2005, through December 14, 2005, and registered in the following states:

Alaska	Iowa	Michigan	New Jersey	South Dakota
Colorado	Kansas	Minnesota	New York	Utah
Connecticut	Kentucky	Missouri	North Dakota	Vermont
Delaware	Maine	Montana	Ohio	West Virginia
Idaho	Maryland	Nebraska	Pennsylvania	Wisconsin
Illinois	Massachusetts	New Hampshire	Rhode Island	Wyoming
Indiana				

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 139,537 vehicles currently registered in the states identified above.

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

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

The side door latch mechanisms may experience water intrusion that, over time, may wash out grease applied during the manufacturing process. This condition may allow the latch mechanism to freeze during temperatures significantly below freezing in combination with a wet environment. As a result, the door latch pawl may not return to the latched position when the door is closed. There are no reports alleging accidents, injuries, or loss of property.

573.6 (c) (6) - Chronology of Events

As of January 11, 2006, engineering identified 84 incidents involving allegations that the side door latches may have frozen and failed to function as designed. On March 3, 2006, the Enhanced Concern Identification (ECI) activity issued a subsequent report that identified 359 incidents (including the previously identified 84) involving 2005 model year affected vehicles (built from March 1, 2003 through April 30, 2005) that may relate to this issue. Of these 359 incidents, 16 were allegations that a side door opened while driving and two were determined to be unrelated to this issue. The remaining 341 incidents were various allegations of doors experiencing "bounce-back" or being hard to close.

Only one of these 341 incidents occurred in a state not covered by the safety recall. In the warranty claim related to this incident the driver complained of a difficult to close condition, not of an inadvertent door opening.

All of the 16 incidents in which a side door is alleged to have opened while driving occurred in the states covered by this safety recall. In all instances the door ajar warning lamp functioned as designed. No incidents involving 2006 model year vehicles were identified in the ECI report.

On March 21, 2006, Ford's Critical Concern Review Group examined the analysis of field data and the results of the engineering investigation to that time. In April, 2006 engineering began laboratory tests to develop accelerated procedures to evaluate the long-term performance of the front and rear door latch assemblies and potential robustness design changes. Testing proceeded through July, 2006.

On August 4, 2006, a Technical Review Committee (TRC) was held to review the field and engineering test data. It was determined in that meeting that further investigation was required. A subsequent TRC meeting was held on September 14, 2006, and a safety field action was recommended for vehicles in the colder climates, and a regional field action for vehicles in warmer climates would be the appropriate courses of action to address this issue.

On September 22, 2006, the Field Review Committee reviewed these recommendations and approved safety field action number 06S45 and regional field action 06R13 to address this issue.

573.6 (c) (8) - Service Program

Owners will be instructed to return their vehicles to the dealership for: 1) The installation of a shield over the front latches; 2) Sealing of a drain hole in the rear window trim molding on Freestyle rear side doors; and 3) Application of grease to all front and rear side-door latch mechanisms on the affected vehicles.

There will be no charge to owners for this service. Owner notification letters will be mailed on November 3, 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 06S45 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 17, 2006.