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Mr. Daniel C. Smith
Associate Administrator for Safety Assurance
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
400 Seventh Street, S.W., Room 5321
Washington, DC 20590

07V-079
(3 pages)

Dear Mr. Smith:

Subject: Ford Recall No. 07S48

Summary

Ford Action – Ford has decided to conduct a voluntary safety recall involving certain 2003 - 2005 model year Ford Crown Victoria Police Interceptor vehicles currently used in police fleets that may be likely to encounter high speed pursuit driving. These wheels were originally covered by extended warranty program 04M05 to replace wheels when symptoms related to cracks were identified by drivers. Wheel replacements under program 04M05 have been relatively low indicating that only a small percentage of wheels are likely to develop cracks. Extensive investigation found that the cracks progress over time. Normally, the first symptom is slow air loss. Continued operation of a cracked wheel often results in nibble in the steering wheel and difficulty balancing the tire and wheel assembly. Drivers notice these symptoms and recognize the wheel is in need of service. Additionally, testing demonstrated that drivers are able to maintain vehicle control even with a cracked wheel. If a vehicle continues to be operated with a cracked wheel, more rapid air loss could result under severe service conditions such as high speed pursuit driving in police applications. Wheels used in this type of severe usage are more prone to the cracking condition.

Although Ford has not identified an unreasonable risk to safety from this condition, we have decided to conduct this voluntary safety recall to avoid a protracted dispute with the agency.

- Number of Vehicles Involved – Approximately 109,664 vehicles in the United States and Federalized Territories.
- Effect on Vehicle Operation – A crack in a wheel may result in slow, repeated air loss, nibble in the steering wheel, and difficulty in balancing the tire and wheel assembly. Testing demonstrated that drivers are able to maintain vehicle control even with a cracked wheel. If a vehicle continues to be operated with a cracked wheel, more rapid air loss could result under severe service conditions such as high speed pursuit driving in police applications.

Service Procedure – Owners will be notified and instructed to take their vehicles to a Ford or Lincoln-Mercury dealer to have wheels inspected and replaced based on the wheel part number.

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
07S48 -- CERTAIN 2003 - 2005 MODEL YEAR FORD CROWN VICTORIA
POI-ICE INTERCEPTOR STEEL WHEELS

Pursuant to Part 573 of Title 49 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Defect and Non-Compliance 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 2003 - 2005 model year Ford Crown Victoria Police Interceptor vehicles currently used in police fleets that may be likely to encounter high speed pursuit driving. Vehicles equipped with steel wheels, built from October 10, 2001, through December 8, 2004, at the St. Thomas Assembly Plant, St. Thomas, Ontario, are affected. Affected wheels that may have been transferred to another vehicle within a police fleet are also included.

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 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 109,664 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

Some earlier design level wheels may crack, particularly when exposed to severe loading in high speed pursuit driving. The cracks occur at the toe of the weld that connects the rim to the disk. The cracks, which form in the heat affected zone near the weld, are due to cyclic bending which creates a high stress concentration in that area. The cracks may propagate circumferentially. There have been no reports of complete rim separation from the disk.

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

Ford Engineering became aware of an allegation of slow tire air loss on a 2003 Crown Victoria Police Interceptor in service because of a crack in the rim on August 22, 2002. Robustness improvements were implemented September 23, 2002, (weld fill increased), April 23, 2003, (thicker rim material) and December 8, 2004, (addition of shot-peen process).

Ford conducted a voluntary safety recall program (03S05) in August 2003 to replace wheels manufactured before September 23, 2002, and extended the warranty coverage of subject wheels manufactured from September 23, 2002, to April 23, 2003. In August 2004, NHTSA

opened an investigation related to Ford's voluntary safety recall 03S05. In December 2004, Ford expanded the extended warranty coverage to subject wheels manufactured before December 9, 2004, due to a higher than expected warranty repair rate for those wheels.

During the course of the NHTSA investigation on the subject wheel, Ford regularly responded to NHTSA's requests for information and shared the results of its ongoing analyses. Ford found throughout the course of the investigation that the vast majority of the reported wheel cracks were identified as a result of slow air leaks, steering wheel nibble, or difficulty or inability to properly balance a wheel and tire assembly.

573.6 (c) (8) -- Service Program

Owners will be notified and instructed to take their vehicles to a Ford or Lincoln–Mercury dealer to have the wheels inspected and replaced based on wheel part number.

Mailing of all owner notification letters will occur the week of March 12, 2007. Notification to dealers will occur on March 5, 2007.

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 07S48 to this action.

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

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, 2007. The ending date for reimbursement eligibility for remedies paid for by vehicle owners per Ford's general reimbursement plan is March 29, 2007.