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January 28, 2011

Mr. Claude H. Harris  
Acting Associate Administrator for Safety Assurance  
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration  
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE, Room W45-231  
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Mr. Smith:

Subject: Ford Motor Company (Ford) Recall No. 11S15 - Certain 2009 and 2010 Model Year Ford F-150 vehicles with Chrome Interior Door Handles

Summary

- Ford Action - Ford is conducting a voluntary safety recall involving certain 2009 and 2010 model year Ford F-150 vehicles to add a spring embossment reinforcement or, if necessary, replace the side door interior door handle module.
- Number of Vehicles Involved - Approximately 280,946 vehicles in the United States and federalized territories.
- Effect on Vehicle Operation - The interior door handle housing embossment retaining the interior door handle spring may fracture during normal customer usage resulting in insufficient spring force to return the handle to the fully stowed position. The door latch remains fully engaged with this condition. The handle may be loose causing a rattle or noise and the handle may not return to the fully stowed position. Although Ford has not conducted vehicle tests for this condition, depending on the spring load force and handle position, the inertial loads experienced by the interior door handle may cause the door latch to open during a side impact crash. Ford, in an abundance of caution, will add a spring embossment reinforcement or replace the interior side door handle module. As of January 21, 2011, there are no reports of accidents or injuries related to this condition.
- Service Procedure - Owners will be initially notified and instructed to take their vehicles to a Ford or Lincoln/Mercury dealer if any interior door handle is loose or fails to return to the stowed position after activation for replacement of the affect module. Once parts become available, owners will be re-notified and instructed to take their vehicles to a Ford or Lincoln/Mercury dealer for inspection of each interior door handle. Depending on the results of the inspection, the dealer will either add a spring embossment reinforcement or replace the interior door handle module.

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  
11S15 - 2009 AND 2010 MODEL YEAR FORD F-150 VEHICLES - CHROME INTERIOR DOOR  
HANDLE SPRING EMBOSSEMENT

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 2009 and 2010 model year Ford F-150 vehicles built at the Kansas City Assembly Plant (KCAP) and the Dearborn Truck plant (DTP) from January 18, 2008, through November 30, 2009.

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.

The interior door handle modules for the affected vehicles are manufactured by Brose at their facility in Warren Michigan.

The Brose contact person is:

Director of Quality  
Jim Barbaretta  
Brose North America, Inc.  
3933 Automation Avenue  
Auburn Hills, MI 48326

Telephone:  
248-339-4801  
jim.barbaretta@brose.com

573.6 (c) (3) - Estimated Population of Vehicles Potentially Affected

Approximately 280,946 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 interior door handle housing embossment retaining the interior door handle spring may fracture during normal customer usage resulting in insufficient spring force to return the handle to the fully stowed position. The door latch remains fully engaged with this condition. The handle may be loose causing a rattle or noise and the handle may not return to the fully closed position. Although Ford has not conducted vehicle tests for this condition, depending on the spring load force and handle position, the inertial loads experienced by the interior door handle may cause the door latch to open during a side impact crash. Ford, in an abundance of caution, will add a spring embossment reinforcement or replace the interior side door handle module. As of January 21, 2011, there are no reports of accidents or injuries related to this condition.

573.6 (c) (6) - Chronology of Events

On August 31, 2010, Ford Engineering was notified by Ford's Enhanced Concern Identification Group, of increasing warranty reports for loose feeling or rattle of the driver door interior door handle on the 2009 and 2010 F-150 vehicles. Engineering began requesting warranty return parts for evaluation. In September 2010, Engineering determined that the spring embossment was fractured on field return parts for the driver door. On October 10, 2010, the concern was reviewed by Ford's Critical Concern Group (CCRG). Engineering continued analysis of field return and current production parts, part design changes, process reviews, material quality analysis, and material testing of the spring, the door handle and housing plastic from October 2010 through November 2010. Additionally, Engineering conducted field studies of fleet vehicles built within the suspect time period to determine if the other interior door handles were experiencing the same cracking and fracture condition from late November 2010 through December 16, 2010. On January 6, 2011, data was reviewed with the CCRG and It was determined that the same condition could potentially affect the other interior door handles.

On January 12, 2011, a Technical Review Committee was held to review engineering and production data.

On January 21, 2011, the Field Review Committee reviewed the issue and approved a field action.

573.6 (c) (8) - Service Program

Owners will be initially notified and instructed to take their vehicles to a Ford or Lincoln/Mercury dealer if any interior door handle is loose or fails to return to the stowed position after activation for replacement of the affect module. Once parts become available, owners will be re-notified and instructed to take their vehicles to a Ford or Lincoln/Mercury dealer for inspection of each interior door handle. Depending on the results of the inspection, the dealer will either add a spring embossment reinforcement or replace the interior door handle module. There will be no charge to owners for this service.

Ford anticipates that parts will be available in the middle of April 2011.

Mailing of owner notification letters will occur on February 14, 2011. Notification to Dealers will occur on January 31, 2011.

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, 2009.

573.6 (c) (10) - Press statement and Dealer/Owner Letters

National media attention is expected, as with all major recalls, when posted to NHTSA's safecar.gov website. Ford will provide public comments when requested. A news release will not be issued. 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 11S15 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 March 11, 2011.