

49 CFR Part 573 -- DEFECT INFORMATION REPORT
11S25 -- 2004 AND 2005 MODEL YEAR FORD FREESTAR AND MERCURY MONTEREY
VEHICLES -- TORQUE CONVERTER REPLACEMENT

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 2004 and 2005 model year Ford Freestar and Mercury Monterey vehicles.

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 (1-866-436-7332) or by contacting a local Ford or Lincoln dealer who can obtain specific information regarding the vehicles from the Ford On-line Automotive Service Information System (OASIS) database.

Torque Converter Supplier
Exedy America Corporation
2121 Holston Bend Drive
Mascot, TN 37806
Phone number: 734-397-6560
Contact: Lloyd Arisumi
Country of Origin: United States

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

Approximately 205,896 vehicles in the United States and federalized territories are potentially affected.

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

Unknown.

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

The supplier of the torque converter manufactured converters containing a pump shaft spline that did not consistently meet the specified heat treat requirements. As a result, some torque converters may experience worn pump drive splines. If a torque converter malfunctions due to worn pump drive splines, the vehicle will lose motive power.

573.6 (c) (6) - Chronology of Events

July 15, 2009

NHTSA opened PE09-033, based on 65 vehicle owner questionnaires (VOQs). PE09-033 included all 2004 and 2005 model year Freestar and Monterey vehicles and sought reports and claims relating to "torque converter output shaft failure resulting in a sudden loss of motive power with no warning."

Ford responded to NHTSA's PE inquiry on September 8, 2009, explaining there was a low complaint rate, and that a vehicle that loses motive power due to torque converter malfunction remains readily controllable; the vehicle will coast during which it can be safely maneuvered and stopped because the engine continues to run. Because the engine continues to run, steering and braking are unaffected, and the vehicle's electrical system and directional signals remain functional. Further the transmission park system remains fully functional. At that time only one ambiguous, alleged minor accident involving a vehicle trailing behind the Freestar was identified, with no alleged injuries.

November 10, 2009

NHTSA upgraded the PE investigation to an Engineering Analysis (EA09-016). The information request was sent Nov 16, 2010 (see below). Ford continued to monitor reports pertaining to this subject.

November 16, 2010

NHTSA sent a request for information in connection with the EA investigation. Ford provided its response to the agency on January 17, 2011. Ford noted that it continued to see a low complaint rate: Ford had identified one additional accident allegation involving a vehicle trailing behind the Freestar as it coasted to a stop.

August 31, 2011

In a teleconference with Ford, NHTSA requested an update of information relating to EA09-016. Ford submitted its response on September 19, 2011.

September 27, 2011

Ford hosted a Webex to review incident rate data with NHTSA. NHTSA requested information relative to the EA. On October 6, 2011, Ford submitted a warranty data analysis of allegations relating to loss of motive power or vehicle disablement due to torque converter.

November 9, 2011

Ford met with ODI personnel to further discuss the investigation, the complaint rate, and the lack of real world data to support any conclusion that this subject presented an unreasonable safety risk.

December 20, 2011

On December 20, 2011, Ford's Field Review Committee reviewed this subject and approved a field action to be conducted as a Safety Recall to avoid a protracted dispute with the agency.

573.6 (c) (8) - Service Program

Owners will be notified and instructed to take their vehicles to a Ford or Lincoln dealer to have the torque converter replaced. There will be no charge to owners for this service.

Parts are not expected to be available to perform repairs until the second quarter of 2012. Accordingly, we anticipate mailing of owner notification letters will occur during the second quarter of 2012. Notification to dealers will occur on January 6, 2012.

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 24, 2011.

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

National media attention is likely as with most Ford 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 11S25 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 will be determined after the parts availability becomes finalized.