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April 30, 2012

Ms. Nancy Lewis
Associate Administrator for Enforcement
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE, W45-306
Washington, DC 20590

Subject: Supplement to Ford Motor Company (Ford) Recall No. 10S13 - Certain 1998
through 2003 Model Year Ford Windstar Vehicles - Rear Axle Cracking

Dear Ms. Lewis:

Summary

- Ford Action – Ford is supplementing voluntary safety recall 10S13 to add certain 1998 through 2003 model year Ford Windstars either originally sold in or currently registered in Virginia to the program. Recent analysis of information from the field has shown that vehicles operated in Virginia for an extended period of time may also be exposed to the same combination of factors addressed in 10S13 that can make the rear axle susceptible to cracks from stress related corrosion.
- Number of Vehicles Involved – Ford estimates that there are approximately 27,000 vehicles that were either originally sold in or are currently registered in Virginia.
- Effect on Vehicle Operation – A completely fractured rear axle may lead to a loss of vehicle control. There may be little or no warning to the operator before a cracked rear axle completely fractures.
- Service Procedure – Owners will be instructed to take their vehicles to a Ford or Lincoln dealer for an inspection of the rear axle. Owners of vehicles without axle cracking or perforations will have reinforcement brackets installed to extend axle durability in the presence of corrosion. Owners who have vehicles with cracked or rust perforated axles will have their rear axles replaced.

Ford is voluntarily taking this action as a safety recall. Also, Ford is extending the free remedy offer to all vehicle owners in this population, including those vehicles that are beyond the statutorily required free remedy period. The detailed information required by the applicable portions of 49 CFR Part 573 - Defect and Non-Compliance Information Report is attached.

Sincerely,


Steven M. Kenner
Attachment



49 CFR PART 573 – DEFECT INFORMATION REPORT
10S13 – 1998 THROUGH 2003 MODEL YEAR FORD WINDSTAR VEHICLES
REAR AXLE CRACKING

Pursuant to Part 573 of Title 49 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Defect and Non-Compliance Reports, Ford Motor Company (Ford) submits the following information supplementing a safety recall action that had previously been voluntarily initiated.

573.6 (c) (2) – Potentially Affected Vehicles

Vehicles potentially affected are certain 1998 through 2003 model year Ford Windstar vehicles built at the Oakville Assembly Plant (OAP) from September 1, 1997, through July 3, 2003, that were either originally sold in or are currently registered in Virginia.

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.

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

Approximately 27,000 vehicles that were either originally sold in or are currently registered in Virginia are affected by this supplemental action.

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

Unknown.

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

After many years of service on vehicles operated in the high corrosion areas of the United States, corrosion can weaken the rear axle, making it susceptible to torsional stress. There is a small risk that the combined effects of corrosion and stress can lead to cracks which, if undetected, can propagate and result in a complete fracture of the axle. A completely fractured axle can affect vehicle handling and increase the risk of a crash.

573.6 (c) (6) – Chronology of Events

On August 19, 2010, Ford's Field Review Committee (FRC) approved recall 10S13 to address corrosion related rear axle cracking for vehicles that were either originally sold in or are currently registered in one of the 21 corrosion states or Kentucky. Subsequent to this determination, a review of reports identified a similar condition in Utah, and accordingly, the recall was supplemented to add vehicles either originally sold in or are currently registered in Utah.

Consistent with Ford's process for on-going monitoring of reports, a review in March 2012 found an increasing trend in complaints from vehicles in Virginia (11 reports were received from October 2011 to March 2012) and the rate of axle cracking was now similar to that observed in the corrosion states at the time 10S13 was launched. An analysis of the field reports from vehicles operated in Virginia for an extended period of time found the axles on these vehicles may also be exposed to the same combination of factors that make them susceptible to cracking from stress related corrosion. Ford's FRC reviewed the matter on April 23, 2012, and approved adding the vehicles that were either originally sold in or are currently registered in Virginia to the vehicle population of recall 10S13.

573.6 (c) (8) – Service Program

Owners of vehicles that were either originally sold in or are currently registered in Virginia will be instructed to take their vehicles to a Ford or Lincoln dealer for an inspection of the rear axle. Vehicles with no signs of rear axle cracking or rust perforations will have axle reinforcement brackets installed. The reinforcement brackets will extend axle durability in the presence of corrosion. Owners who have vehicles with cracked or rust perforated axles will have their axles replaced. There will be no charge to owners for any of these services.

Owner notification letters will be mailed the week of June 18, 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. Notification to dealers will occur on May 1, 2012.

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 letter 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 10S13 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 June 29, 2012.

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