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April 30, 2012

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

Dear Ms. Lewis:

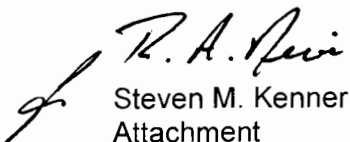
Subject: Ford Motor Company (Ford) Recall No. 12S30 – Certain 1998-2003 model year Ford Windstar vehicles – Rear Axle Cracking in Puerto Rico

Summary

- Ford Action – Ford is conducting a voluntary safety recall involving certain 1998-2003 model year Ford Windstar vehicles for rear axle cracking. Analysis of parts and information from Puerto Rico indicate that some vehicles operated in Puerto Rico are exposed to increased stresses caused by high cycles of torsional loading, which can lead to rear axle cracking.
- Number of Vehicles Involved – Approximately 9,400 vehicles in Puerto Rico are potentially affected.
- 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 notified by mail and instructed to take their vehicles to a Ford or Lincoln dealer for an inspection of the rear axle. Owners of vehicles without axle cracking will have reinforcement brackets installed to extend axle durability. Owners who have vehicles with cracked 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
10S30 – 1998 THROUGH 2003 MODEL YEAR FORD WINDSTAR VEHICLES
REAR AXLE CRACKING IN PUERTO RICO

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 1998-2003 model year Ford Windstar vehicles built at the Oakville Assembly Plant (OAP) from September 1, 1997, through July 3, 2003, that are currently residing in Puerto Rico.

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 dealer who can obtain specific information regarding the vehicles from the Ford On-line Automotive Service Information System (OASIS) database.

The information for the supplier of the rear axle, that is the subject of this defect report, is provided below:

Axle Assy - Rear (Non-Driven)

Corporate Name of Supplier:	Benteler Automotive Corp.
Supplier Address:	9000 E. Michigan Avenue, Galesburg, MI, 49053
Supplier Phone Number:	(248)364-7027
Point of Contact at Supplier:	Bryan Lach - Sales Account Manager
Country of Origin for the Component:	Final assembly in USA

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

Approximately 9,400 vehicles in Puerto Rico 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

Export and Growth identified an increasing number of reports of rear axle cracks and fractures on 1998-2003 Windstar vehicles in the Puerto Rican market. Analysis of parts and information from Puerto Rico indicate that some vehicles operated in Puerto Rico are exposed to increased stresses caused by high cycles of torsional loading, which can lead to rear axle cracking. A completely fractured axle can affect vehicle handling and increase the risk of a crash.

573.6 (c) (6) – Chronology of Events

On May 13, 2010, the NHTSA opened an investigation (PE10-016) on rear axle beam failures on 1999 through 2003 model year Ford Windstar vehicles. On August 19, 2010, Ford's Field Review Committee (FRC) reviewed the issue and approved field action 10S13.

Consistent with our process for managing regional recalls, Ford continued to monitor reports from vehicles in other states and territories not originally included in 10S13. A review of these reports conducted in October 2011 showed an increased number of axle fractures in Puerto Rico. This issue was reviewed in Ford's CCRG process and engineering assessed that vehicles operated in Puerto Rico are exposed to increased stresses caused by high cycles of torsional loading, which can lead to rear axle cracking. This trend was confirmed in a March 2012 update report and has not been seen in other states or federalized territories.

An analysis of the field reports from vehicles operated in Puerto Rico found that after many years of service, repeated exposure to high torsional loads can weaken the rear axle, making it susceptible to cracking. On April 23, 2012, Ford's Field Review Committee reviewed the concern and approved field action 12S30.

573.6 (c) (8) – Service Program

Owners will be notified by mail and instructed to take their vehicle(s) to a Ford or Lincoln dealer for an inspection of the rear axle. Vehicles with no signs of rear axle cracking will have reinforcement brackets installed. The reinforcement brackets will extend axle durability. Owners who have vehicles with cracked axles will have their rear axles replaced. There will be no charge to owners for any of these services.

Mailing of owner notification letters will begin the week of May 21, 2012, and is expected to be completed by May 25, 2012. Notification to dealers will occur on May 1, 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 safercar.gov website. Ford will provide public comments when requested. A news release will not be issued.

Ford will forward a copy of the notification letters to dealers and owners to the agency when available.

573.6 (c) (11) – Recall Number

Ford has assigned recall number 12S30 to this action.

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

The ending date for reimbursement eligibility for the cost of remedies paid for by vehicle owners per Ford's general reimbursement plan is June 4, 2012.

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