

49 CFR Part 573 – DEFECT INFORMATION REPORT
13S01 – CERTAIN 2004 – 2007 MODEL YEAR FORD FREESTAR AND MERCURY
MONTEREY VEHICLES EQUIPPED WITH A THIRD ROW SEAT – CORROSION IN THE REAR
WHEEL WELL AREA OF THE THIRD ROW SEAT STRIKER

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 through 2007 model year Ford Freestar and Mercury Monterey vehicles equipped with a third row seat that were built at the Oakville Assembly Plant (OAP) from March 24, 2003, to November 7, 2006, and originally sold in or currently registered in Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wisconsin.

These vehicles were 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.

The supplier of the rear wheel well assembly, that is the subject of this defect report, is no longer in business.

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

Approximately 196,667 vehicles that were either originally sold in or are currently registered in the high corrosion areas of the United States 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

When the fold flat third row seat is in its seating position, the front portion is latched to a striker that is mounted to the rear wheel well via a stud mounting plate and a reinforcement plate. These plates are welded to the exterior of the rear wheel well and the assembly is sealed. In some cases the sealing may have been inadequate, and over time on vehicles operated in these areas, water and corrosive products can enter the space between the components, potentially resulting in corrosion that can degrade the striker mounting system. Continued corrosion in this area may result in the inability to fully latch the forward portion of the third row seat into its seating position. Seat belts and permanent seat anchorages to the vehicle, which are at the rear of the seat, are unaffected.

There are no reports of accidents or injuries associated with this condition.

573.6 (c) (6) – Chronology of Events

In August 2011 Ford became aware of a customer alleging difficulty latching the third row seat into its seating position. Ford Product and Service Engineering representatives reviewed that vehicle and began evaluating the condition.

On January 5, 2012, the agency opened a preliminary evaluation PE11-039 on 2004 through 2007 model year Freestar and Monterey vehicles to evaluate the effects of corrosion in the rear wheel well relative to the third row seat latching mechanism. The agency had received seven complaints of corrosion in the rear wheel well area potentially affecting the third row seat latch. Ford had received 12 reports as of February 23, 2012, that potentially related to the agency's preliminary evaluation; none of those reports alleged seat movement in an accident or any injuries.

Between January 2012 and November 2012 Ford and the agency continued an active dialogue on this subject and conducted vehicle surveys and testing.

On November 14, 2012, the agency upgraded its investigation to an engineering analysis, EA12-003. The agency received an additional 52 reports of corrosion in the rear wheel well potentially affecting the third row seat latch. Ford identified a total of 49 reports that potentially related to the agency's inquiries for a total of 80 non-duplicative reports potentially associated with the alleged defect as of January 11, 2013, the date of Ford's response to EA12-003. None of those reports alleged seat movement in an accident or any injuries.

On February 25, 2013, Ford's Field Review Committee reviewed the concern and approved a field action.

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 who will install new third row seat latch striker mounting brackets, which relocate the seat latch strikers from the potentially corroded area. In addition, dealers are to install overlay panels on the exterior of the wheel wells to prevent entry of water and corrosive elements. There will be no charge to owners for this service.

Mailing of owner notification letters will begin March 27, 2013. Notification to dealers will occur on March 5, 2013.

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 20, 2013.

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.

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 13S01 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 May 15, 2013.

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