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13V-109
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Steve M. Kenner, Global Director
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330 Town Center Drive
Dearborn, MI 48126-2738

March 25, 2013

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. 13S03 - Certain 2012 Model Year Ford Taurus and Lincoln MKS, and certain 2013 Model Year Ford Explorer Vehicles Fuel Tank Seam Leaks

Summary

- Ford Action - Ford is conducting a voluntary safety recall involving certain 2012 model year Ford Taurus and Lincoln MKS, and certain 2013 model year Ford Explorer vehicles to inspect and, if necessary, replace the fuel tank.

- Number of Vehicles Involved - Approximately 3,037 vehicles in the United States and federalized territories are potentially affected.

- Effect on Vehicle Operation – Some of the fuel tanks in the suspect population may have been manufactured with inadequate blow mold press hydraulic clamp pressure, allowing the molds to partially open during the molding cycle. This may have resulted in a marginally sealed seam in the side of the tank. As a result, some of the fuel tanks may not provide the expected strength in the event of an impact. A marginally sealed seam may also leak resulting in a fuel odor. In a small number of warranty claims, fuel leaks have been reported. Ford is not aware of any accidents, injuries, or fires associated with this condition.

- Service Procedure - Owners will be notified by mail and instructed to take their vehicle(s) to a Ford or Lincoln dealer to have their fuel tank inspected and, if necessary, replaced.

The detailed information required by the applicable portions of 49 CFR Part 573 - Defect and Non-Compliance Information Report is attached.

Sincerely,

for Steven M. Kenner
Attachment

49 CFR PART 573 – DEFECT INFORMATION REPORT
13S03 – CERTAIN 2012 MODEL YEAR FORD TAURUS AND LINCOLN MKS, AND CERTAIN 2013 MODEL YEAR FORD EXPLORER VEHICLES – FUEL TANK SEAMS

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 2012 model year Ford Taurus and Lincoln MKS, and certain 2013 model year Ford Explorer Vehicles built at the Chicago Assembly Plant (CAP) from July 19, 2011, through March 15, 2012.

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.

The information for the supplier of the fuel tank, that is the subject of this defect report, is provided below.

Fuel Tank:

Supplier Name: Inergy Automotive Systems (USA) LLC
Supplier Address: 2710 Bellingham, Suite 400, Troy, MI 48083
Supplier Telephone Number: 517-605-3131
Supplier Contact: Larry Town, Plant Manager
Country of origin for the component: USA

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

Approximately 3,037 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

Some of the fuel tanks in the suspect population may have been manufactured with inadequate blow mold press hydraulic clamp pressure, allowing the molds to partially open during the molding cycle. This may have resulted in a marginally sealed seam in the side of the tank. As a result, some of the fuel tanks may not provide the expected strength in the event of an impact. A marginally sealed seam may also leak resulting in a fuel odor. In a small number of warranty claims, fuel leaks have been reported. Ford is not aware of any accidents, injuries, or fires associated with this condition.

573.6 (c) (6) - Chronology of Events

February 2012 – Ford received 2 fuel tanks from 2012 model year Taurus vehicles in Saudi Arabia that were reported to have fuel odor/leaks. Initial engineering inspection of the Saudi Arabia tanks showed an anomaly in the tank wall at the mold seam. Engineering identified a US warranty claim for a 2012 model year Taurus vehicle with a fuel leak and requested the fuel tank from Ford Customer Service. Engineering was requested to locate and review tanks which had been molded in the same time frame as the fuel tanks used in the Saudi Arabia vehicles and to monitor field warranty reports for potentially related issues, and fires.

March 2012 – Engineering and the supplier implemented tank manufacturing process improvements to prevent recurrence.

May 2012 – Warranty claims identified a possible leak concern with a 2013 model year Explorer. The assembly plant issued a Stop Ship for the 2013 Explorer. Engineering advised that a hydraulic pressure anomaly had been identified on a mold used to manufacture 2012 model year Taurus fuel tanks. Engineering was requested to review the supplier's hydraulic molding pressure records in an attempt to identify tank production dates during which the hydraulic pressure anomaly may have existed, and to then procure fuel tanks from the suspect build period for engineering analysis.

June 2012 – Engineering presented hydraulic molding pressure data from the supplier's manufacturing database and proposed a methodology for identifying fuel tank molding timeframes that may have been related to the small number of field reports. Engineering continued to review supplier process data and field returns in an attempt to identify possible correlation trends.

August 2012 – Engineering reported that suspect tanks initially identified could not be retrieved so additional fuel tanks were being identified and procured. Field data was monitored for any additional reports.

October 2012 – Engineering advised that 6 fuel tanks from the suspect time frame had been retrieved from the field and analyzed. None of the tanks exhibited weepage or leakage. Five of the tanks were determined to be normal, with no anomalies. One tank exhibited a mold seam anomaly. Engineering was requested to further review the tank with the mold seam anomaly.

November 2012 – Engineering presented detailed reports on the location, physical structure and possible causes of the fuel tank anomaly. These reports included Microtome analysis for sections of the fuel tank wall and an analysis of the blow molding pressure hydraulic system process. Engineering also reviewed the blow molding clamp pressure curves for both normal and suspect fuel tank molding time frames.

December 2012 – Engineering identified the blow molding clamp pressure as a suspected root cause and proposed to conduct engineering specification testing on fuel tanks with the simulated anomaly.

January 2013 – Engineering advised that the fuel tanks with the simulated anomaly did not meet all the engineering specification requirements. Engineering was requested to identify each instance of the blow molding clamp pressure concern at the supplier.

March 2013 – Engineering completed the identification of each instance of the blow molding clamp pressure concern at the supplier and the corresponding Tank Identification Numbers (TIN). The list of Vehicle Identification Numbers corresponding to these TINs was then developed.

March 18, 2013 – The Field Review Committee reviewed the issue 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 to have their fuel tank inspected and, if necessary, replaced. There will be no charge to owners for this service.

Mailing of owner notification letters will occur the week of April 22, 2013. Notification to dealers will occur on March 26, 2013.

In accordance with Part 573.13(d)(1), Ford is excluding reimbursement for costs incurred by owners for repair of this concern because Ford's original warranty program would provide for a free repair for this concern for customers.

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 when available.

573.6 (c) (11) - Recall Number

Ford has assigned recall number 13S03 to this action.

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