

Ford Motor Company

00V-335 (01)

L. W. Camp, Director
Automotive Safety Office
Environmental and Safety Engineering

October 19, 2000

Mr. Kenneth N. Weinstein
Associate Administrator for Safety Assurance
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
400 Seventh Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Mr. Weinstein:

Pursuant to Part 573 of Title 49 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Defect and Noncompliance Reports, Ford Motor Company submits the following information concerning a safety-compliance recall action that it is voluntarily initiating.

573.5 (c)(2)

All 1998 model year Ford Louisville and Aeromax trucks with tandem rear axles with ABS built at the Kentucky Truck Plant from November 5, 1998 through December 18, 1997.

Because the vehicles are not produced in VIN order, information as to the applicability of this action to specific vehicles can best be obtained by calling Ford's toll-free line (1-800-392-3673).

573.5 (c)(3)

Approximately 8,400 vehicles are affected. As a result of the sale of its heavy truck business to Freightliner, Ford ended production of the Louisville and Aeromax trucks on December 21, 1997.

573.5 (c)(4)

It is estimated that approximately 30 percent are affected.

573.5 (c)(5)

The air brake system on the affected vehicles were plumbed such that complete air reservoir isolation was not provided. Some vehicles were built with an air line from the system ECU Relay Valve Module tee fitting, incorrectly connected to the system supply tank, rather than to the system auxiliary primary tank. A leakage or failure causing a pressure loss in the



secondary tank of these incorrectly plumbed vehicles will result in the draining of the primary tank also, and thus a complete loss of vehicle system air pressure. These vehicles, therefore, do not comply with the FMVSS 121 requirement that each service reservoir system be protected against loss of air pressure due to failure or leakage in the system between the service reservoir and the source of air pressure.

Under normal conditions, the service brakes on the affected vehicles operate as intended. However, if a brake system air line were damaged causing leakage depleting the pressure in the secondary tank, the primary tank will also drain, and an emergency spring activated brake would be deployed. With the emergency spring brake deployed, the vehicle would stop and could not be moved until the brake air system was repaired. (A leakage depleting the air pressure in the primary tank, however, would not drain the secondary tank, and not result in total pressure loss - check valves are in place to prevent this secondary tank leakage.)

573.5 (c)(7)

This concern was brought to Ford's attention by a dealer who found units with this reservoir isolation condition while servicing vehicles of a customer's fleet. A review by Ford personnel of the air brake system design, and a subsequent inspection of another separate eighteen vehicles, five of which exhibited this condition, verified that this mis-build condition was not limited to the one customer's fleet but likely existed on other vehicles in the field.

573.5 (c)(8)

Ford is not aware of any field or owner reports (with the exception of those identified above) or allegations of accidents or injuries related to this condition. Owners of record of the affected vehicles will be notified on or about the week of December 4, 2000, and advised to contact their dealer to make arrangements for inspection, and where necessary, repair of their vehicles. The vehicles will be inspected to determine whether the vehicle has the incorrectly routed air line. Those with the condition will be correctly plumbed and the air brake system tested to verify proper reservoir isolation. This remedy will be at no cost to the owners.

573.5 (c)(9)

Ford does not at this time plan to make a statement available to the media concerning the subject matter of this recall. Copies of the Notification letters to dealers and owners from Ford Customer Service Division will be forwarded to the agency when available.

573.5 (c)(11)

Ford has assigned campaign number 00S34 to this action.

Sincerely,


L.W. Camp

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