

*Ford Motor Company*

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DEFECTS INVESTIGATION

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

October 26, 2000

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

00V-349(01)

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-related recall action that it is initiating.

As the Agency is aware, Ford conducted an extensive investigation into reported parking brake concerns on 1994-1998 Mustang vehicles during the course of the Agency's Preliminary Evaluation and Engineering Analysis Investigations. As a result of the findings of those investigations we concluded that the reported vehicle movements occurred when the vehicles were not parked in accordance with instructions in the Owner Guide; i.e., the vehicles were not being parked in first (or reverse) gear and the parking brakes were not being properly (fully) applied. During our investigation we visited sites where vehicle movements had reportedly occurred and had owners show us how they parked the vehicles. We found that frequently vehicles would not even move on grades if left only in first gear without the parking brake applied, yet the owners reported parking the vehicle in gear with the parking brake applied.

In June of this year the Agency demonstrated to Ford personnel a condition in which the pawl of the self-adjust mechanism did not fully engage the sector teeth when the parking brake handle was applied in a specific manner. Ford subsequently had a contractor apply the parking brake in no special manner 100 times each on 70 different Mustangs and did not find any instances of the condition observed by the Agency. Although we have no reason to believe that any of the reported incidents are the result of the condition demonstrated by the Agency, we will conduct the action described below to avoid protracted dispute with the Agency concerning the causes of the reported vehicle movements.



00V-349 (2)

573.5 (c) (2)

All 1994-2001 model year Ford Mustang passenger cars equipped with manual transmissions and built from October 4, 1993 through October 10, 2000.

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 (1-800-392-3673) or contacting a local Ford or Lincoln/Mercury dealer, who can obtain specific information regarding the vehicles from the Ford OASIS computer system.

573.5 (c) (3)

Approximately 434,000 vehicles.

573.5 (c) (4)

The percentage of vehicles estimated to actually contain a defect is unknown.

573.5 (c) (5)

There is no overt indication to a driver if the self adjustment pawl of the parking brake control has only partially engaged in the sector gear. If a vehicle is parked with the parking brake not fully applied and not in first gear, as directed in the Owner Guide, and the pawl subsequently skips one or two teeth, the vehicle may move on some grades.

573.5 (c) (6)

An investigation of the inability of the parking brake to hold a vehicle stationary on an incline was initiated in January, 1998 in response to the Agency's opening of Preliminary Investigation PE97-051. Our investigation of nine complaints that duplicated the incident and the investigation of an additional ten complaints by a contractor on behalf of Ford did not identify any defect. On the contrary, these investigations confirmed that the parking brake would hold the vehicle stationary when fully applied as instructed in the Owner Guide. In many cases the vehicles would remain stationary if left only in first gear without the parking brake applied.

In a June 27, 2000 meeting at the Vehicle Transportation Research Center in East Liberty, Ohio, the Agency demonstrated to Ford the potential for the self adjust pawl of the parking brake control to partially engage in the sector when the parking brake was applied in a specific manner. The Agency also demonstrated that the parking brake could self release when in this condition.

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00V-349 (23)

In July 2000, the parking brake on 70 Mustang vehicles (10 each from the 1994-2000 model years) was applied 100 times in no special manner by a contractor for Ford in an effort to duplicate the condition demonstrated by the Agency. No occurrences of the condition were noted. On August 23, 2000 during a visit to the Ford contractor, NHTSA personnel demonstrated the condition to Ford personnel when applying the parking brake in a specific manner.

573.5 (c) (8)

Ford will begin notifying owners of record of affected vehicles on or about the week of November 27, 2000 to return their vehicles to dealers for modification of the parking brake control to remove the self adjust parking pawl kick-out tab and install a plate or over-bracket to the control to lock the self adjust mechanism in position following adjustment.

There will be no charge to owners for this service.

573.5 (c) (9)

Ford does not plan to make a public statement concerning the subject matter of this action. A copy of the Notification letters to dealers and owners from Ford Customer Service Division will be forwarded when available.

573.5 (c) (11)

Ford has assigned campaign number 00S37 to this action.

Sincerely,



L. W. Camp