



U.S. Department
of Transportation
National Highway
Traffic Safety
Administration

ODI RESUME

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INVESTIGATION: RQ98-011
 SUBJECT: Automatic Shoulder Belt Failure
 PROMPTED BY: 96V-172
 PRINCIPAL ENGINEER: Nha Nguyen

DATE OPENED: 7/31/98
 DATE CLOSED: 2-16-99

MANUFACTURER: Ford Motor Company
 MODEL(S): Probe
 MODEL YEAR(S): 1990 through 1992
 VEHICLE POPULATION: 224,867

PROBLEM DESCRIPTION: The recall defect is the motorized shoulder belt track assembly which may wear sufficiently under certain conditions causing the buckle assembly to jam in place. The recall has a low completion rate and numerous consumer complaints indicating an inability to have the recall work done.

FAILURE REPORT SUMMARY

	ODI	MANUFACTURER	TOTAL
COMPLAINTS:	16*	969**	969
CRASHES:	0	6	6
INJ CRASHES:	0	1	1
# INJURIES:	0	1	1
FAT CRASHES:	0	0	0
# FATALS:	0	0	0
OTHER:			

* Since October 1997; ** Including ODI reports

ACTION: A Recall Query (RQ) has been closed.

ENGINEER: NN
2/16/99
 DATE

DIV CHF: [Signature]
2-16-99
 DATE

OFC DIR: [Signature]
2-16-99
 DATE

SUMMARY: Ford conducted a safety recall, 98V-069, on October 28, 1996. The recall was for all 1990 through 1992 model year Probe which were equipped with front seat motorized (passive) shoulder belts as standard equipment. The affected vehicles were built from August 14, 1989, through February 7, 1992. The motorized shoulder belt of the affected vehicles may malfunction due to wear of the track assemblies that guide the moveable shoulder belt anchorages along the sides of the roof above the doors. Eventually, the moveable anchorages could jam in positions along the rails and not lock in place at the "B" pillar. If this were to occur, the system may not provide the proper protection to the front occupants in the event of a crash. Ford assigned recall number, 96S48 and 96S99 for driver and passenger side's shoulder belts, respectively.

The purpose of this recall query was to determine the cause of this recall's low completion rate which was 33% after 6 reporting quarters. Since October 1997, ODI has received 16 owner reports alleging the recall was not honored by the dealers or the replacement parts were not available.

In response to ODI information request, Ford provided the following information, explanations and subsequent action:

- In an effort to manage parts supply, Ford conducted the recall notification in phases. The recall letters sent to owners were staggered, the dates ranging from December 15, 1996, to March 15, 1997. Ford renotified owners via postcard reminders on June 6, 1997.
- Repair records through September 14, 1998, indicate the following number of completions for Ford recall 96S48 (driver side rail assembly) and for Ford recall 96S99 (inspection and/or replacement of passenger side assembly):

Vehicles Involved	224,867	(%)
Driver's Side Rail Replaced (96S48)	85,119	(38%)
Passenger Side Rail Inspected/Replaced (96S99)	50,761/31,728 (Total 82489*)	(36.6%)

* Ford stated the total passenger's side rail number was less than the driver's side due to lack of available parts.

- As of the eighth quarterly status report, dated February 2, 1999, the recall completion rates were 41% and 39% for the driver and passenger's side, respectively.
- A total of 969 consumer complaints which includes ODI's 16 complaints, were reported from September 22, 1996 through September 4, 1998. Of those, six vehicles were involved in crashes with one resulting in an injury while waiting for back order parts.
- Ford believes that the lower than desired completion rate has resulted for two reasons: (1) availability of certain parts required for the remedy; and, (2) the reluctance of some customers to bring their car, with a "properly functioning" restraint system, in for remedy.
- No technical service bulletins related to the subject matter have been issued by Ford after the recall was initiated.
- In January 1999, Ford sent new renotification letters to all owners whose vehicles have not been repaired.
- Ford believes parts are now available and will stimulate additional owners to seek the recall repair increasing the completion rate.
- New NHTSA recall sub-numbers were assigned to the recall, 96V-172.003 for the driver side and 96V-172.004 for the passenger side. Ford will continue to submit quarterly report for an addition six quarters.

Since Ford has taken acceptable action to improve the performance of this safety recall, this investigation is closed. However, NHTSA will continue to monitor the performance of the recall and the agency reserves the right to take further action if warranted by future circumstances.

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