



# PRESS RELEASE

## State of Louisiana

Attorney General Richard P. Ieyoub

*CONTACT: Allan Pursnell or Pam Laborde (225) 339-5136*

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Atty. Gen. Richard Ieyoub wants Ford to fix fire-prone cars killing law officers**

### **Moratorium recommended on the purchase of any Ford Crown Victoria Police interceptors to protect the officers and citizens of the State of Louisiana**

BATON ROUGE –Louisiana Attorney General Richard Ieyoub recommended an immediate moratorium on the purchase of Ford Crown Victoria Police Interceptor vehicles until Ford assures the state that the vehicles will not burst into flames on rear impact, and backs that assurance with independent testing. By this action, Ieyoub announced stepped up efforts to protect Louisiana Law Enforcement from dangers associated with the Ford Crown Victoria Police Interceptor.

In announcing his intention to put more pressure on Ford Motor Company to answer questions surrounding the safety of the Ford Crown Victoria, Ieyoub explained, “One of my primary concerns is the health and safety of our law enforcement officers. In the past four months, two police officers have burned to death while on duty in their Crown Victorias.”

On October 23, 2002, City of Dallas Police Officer Thomas Metzler died when his Ford Crown Victoria Police Interceptor was rear-ended and erupted in flames. On December 20, 2002, New York State Trooper Robert Ambrose died when his Ford Crown Victoria Police Interceptor was rear ended as he was conducting an accident investigation. These most recent deaths come nearly five years after the loss of a Louisiana Officer. On May 19, 1998, Louisiana State Trooper Hung Le was killed when his Ford Crown Victoria was rear ended and exploded. Ford Motor Company quietly settled a lawsuit by the family, and the terms are confidential. Thirteen police officers in total have died in fire while on duty in Ford Crown Victorias; other lawsuits by the families have also been settled quietly.

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“What is particularly disturbing,” according to General Ieyoub, “in virtually each accident in which an officer died, the officer would have otherwise survived the accident, but was burned to death.” The Dallas Medical Examiner recently reported that Officer Metzler died of burns and smoke inhalation. According to news reports, witnesses tried to save New York State Trooper Ambrose as he struggled to free himself, but the flames were too intense.

According to dozens of lawsuits filed by police departments around the country, the Ford Crown Victoria Police Interceptor is not safe for the intended purpose – a vehicle to be used by law enforcement – and is unreasonably dangerous. Police departments in Louisiana, Florida, Ohio, Texas, Mississippi, Alabama, Illinois, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania have filed lawsuits. These lawsuits contend that the placement of the

tank dramatically and unnecessarily increases the risk of explosion and fire.

In September 2002, after years of denying any problem with the Ford Crown Victoria Police Interceptor, Ford Motor Company announced a system of partial shields to prevent punctures of the fuel tank. "I am deeply concerned about the fact that the shields announced by Ford, which have not been independently tested, would not have prevented a puncture to Officer Metzler's car," explained Attorney General Ieyoub. Ford also announced that trunk packages to prevent equipment from puncturing the tank would now be available for sale but must be bought by the Police Departments.

Ieyoub announced that he intended to take the following action: "Immediately, I am asking Ford Motor Company to address our safety concerns and answer truthfully what they have known about these risks. I am also requiring Ford Motor Company to permit and fund independent testing of all proposed safety changes to these vehicles at Ford's expense. While we await the results of the independent testing and obtain the necessary answers from Ford, I am recommending to all law enforcement in the State that they implement a moratorium on any future purchase of the Ford Crown Victoria. I will be inviting all law enforcement agencies in the State to meet with me personally in Baton Rouge in the coming weeks to discuss safety concerns surrounding the Ford Crown Victoria and what can be done to put pressure on Ford to fix this problem. Finally, if Ford does not address these concerns to my satisfaction, I will consider initiating a lawsuit intended to protect our law enforcement officers."

Attorney General Ieyoub said, "Our law enforcement officers place themselves in harms way every minute of every day for us. They do so with little regard for their own safety and we ask much of these men and women. We owe the law enforcement officers of our State the duty to take every step possible to provide them the safest environment to work and protect our citizens. Today, we take the next possible step."

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