

Safety Alert

Ford Crown Victoria

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Is Ford protecting those who serve and protect?

Dallas Crash Tests Show Crown Victoria Fails Ford's Own 75 MPH Standard for Police Safety

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Tuesday, July 15, 2003

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DALLAS, TX -- City officials rushed to announce results of three crash tests of Ford Crown Victoria police cars today after one test showed the installation of a Ford trunk safety package may actually increase the danger of major fuel spillage and risk of burn injury in rear-end crashes.

"We want law enforcement across the country to know Ford's claims regarding the efficacy of the trunk packs clearly is not proven, and in fact, their use may further endanger officers," said Dallas City Attorney Madeleine Johnson.

Johnson said the independent crash tests commissioned by the City of Dallas were conducted July 10 and 11 at the KARCO Engineering testing facility in Adelanto, CA, by Transportation Safety Technologies, Inc., an independent engineering firm.

"While a full analysis of test results is still underway, we felt we could not sit on the results about the trunk packs since Ford has recently started shipping them to departments who ordered them," Johnson said. Ford is making trunk packs available to dealers at a recommended list price of \$250, and is touting them as a safeguard against fuel tank punctures by trunk equipment during rear-end crashes.

Johnson said the most alarming findings surfaced in a crash test that replicated a Crown Victoria crash test conducted by Ford last August. This particular test featured use of a trunk pack, while the

July 15, 2003:



Dallas City Attorney letter to Ford. [Click here](#) to view.

Ford CVPI trunk pack Evaluation



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[The Design Problem](#)
[Testing](#)
[Cases and Reports](#)
[Ford's Technical Service Bulletin](#)
[The Class Action](#)
[What you can do](#)
[Register here for updates](#)
[Media tools](#)
[About the CVPI](#)
[HOME](#)

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earlier Ford test did not. Both used 200 pounds of sand in the trunk to represent the weight of police equipment, and both were hit at the nominal impact speed of 75 miles per hour.

The fuel tank of the vehicle equipped with the trunk pack split wide open "like a melon" alongside a seam across the top of the tank, Johnson said. The estimated size of the tear was one inch wide to two to three feet long, she said.

"In other words, installation of the new trunk pack resulted in worse performance, and clear failure of the 75 mile per our test," Johnson said.

Ford has never crash-tested Crown Victorias equipped with normal police equipment in the trunk or outfitted with trunk packs. In addition, Johnson said she recently learned that Ford has not crash-tested either its 2003 or 2004 model police cars to the 75 mph standard even though it is marketing the cars to law enforcement as meeting that standard. According to recent depositions of Ford executives, Ford has no plans, program or budget in place to test these cars to assure this standard is met, she added.

An explanation for failure of the trunk pack to protect the fuel tank may lie in testimony by a Ford fuel system engineer in a deposition taken in February, Johnson said. In his testimony, the engineer expressed concerns that by increasing the rigidity of the rear wall behind the tank, the trunk pack could restrict the ability of the fuel tank to "flow and conform" during impact. In other words, the trunk pack may spread the pattern of the crash in such a way as to cause a massive rupture, Johnson explained.

Dallas initiated its own crash tests of the popular police vehicle after one of its officers was killed in a Crown Victoria fuel-fed fire in October, and after Ford refused to offer substantial proof that a series of safety upgrades actually would better protect officers from burn injury and death.

"If Ford were doing its job, the city of Dallas would not be in the business of crash testing its cars," Johnson noted.

Fourteen police officers have burned to death since 1983 after the fuel tanks of their Ford Crown Victorias punctured in rear-end crashes, spilling fuel which then ignited. Since 2002, five officers have died, the latest on May 22 near Kansas City, Mo.

Ford claimed its August 2002 crash test proved a Crown Victoria police car equipped with an "optional upgrade kit" that shielded suspension components could successfully withstand a 75 mph rear impact without sustaining fuel tank punctures. In a letter to law enforcement customers in May, Ford wrote "Ford is committed to the 75 mph crash test with no fuel tank punctures" and encouraged departments to add this requirement to vehicle bid specifications

However, all three independent crash tests ordered by Dallas

showed Crown Victorias equipped with Ford's safety upgrades consistently failed the 75 mph standard, Johnson reported.

The Dallas crash tests were conducted at the nominal speed of 75 mph using a Taurus bullet vehicle impacting a Crown Victoria fitted with Ford's optional upgrade shields. In each test, the impact was biased to the left side of the CVPI with a 50% overlap and the fuel tank was filled to 95% capacity. These specifications matched Ford's August 2002 test parameters.

Following is a summary of crash tests and results:

- Test No. 1 featured a trunk loaded with equipment frequently used by law enforcement and known to have penetrated fuel tanks from the rear in crashes. The test resulted in four punctures with substantial leakage, Johnson said.
- Test No. 2 used a vehicle equipped with Ford's trunk pack, which is a hard molded container for storage of police equipment that may turn into projectiles if the car is hit from the rear. The pack was then loaded with 200 pounds of sand to replicate Ford's crash test, which was conducted without a trunk pack. Ford claimed the sand represented the weight of police equipment, although critics maintained the sand was useless as an evaluation of projectile behavior and was used mainly to absorb impact and garner favorable test results.
- Nevertheless, the test using the trunk pack resulted in major leakage when the impact caused the fuel tank to split alongside the seam weld across the top of the tank. This leakage far exceeded the leakage reported by Ford in its August test.
- Test No. 3 featured a vehicle with a trunk pack loaded with the same standard police equipment as test number one. The test resulted in apparent punctures of the tank with substantial leakage.

"Trunk pack or no trunk pack, law enforcement officers still appear to be in significant danger from necessary police trunk equipment puncturing Crown Victoria fuel tanks when the vehicle is struck from behind.

"Ford's band aid approach to enhancing the safety performance of the Crown Victoria is proving not only ineffective, but dangerous. Its arrogance is astonishing" Johnson said.

The one area of good news for police is that Ford's optional upgrade shields appear to have performed successfully to prevent punctures of the fuel tanks by suspension components in all three tests. Since last year, Ford dealers have been installing the shields on all police vehicles at Ford's expense.

Johnson said she has sent the preliminary report to Douglass

Lampe, Ford's general counsel, along with an invitation to Ford engineers to examine the crashed vehicles and the test results. Ford earlier had declined an offer by Dallas to participate in the design and implementation of the independent tests.

The letter was copied to the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration, which June 30 sent a letter to Dallas officials reiterating its position that no action by NHTSA is required.

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