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Thursday, Jan 29, 2004

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Business

Posted on Thu, Jan. 22, 2004

Philadelphia suit claims defect in Ford police cruisers

DAVID B. CARUSO
Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA - The city on Thursday joined a list of cities that have filed lawsuits claiming that the Ford Motor Co.'s top-selling police cruiser has a defect that can cause it to explode if hit from behind.

The suit says Ford has not done enough to fix a problem with the fuel system in the popular Crown Victoria Police Interceptor.

Philadelphia City Solicitor Nelson Diaz said 16 police officers have burned to death in fires ignited in rear-end collisions.

The National Association of Police Organizations, which represents police unions around the country, filed a similar suit last year in New York. Police departments also have sued Ford in Louisiana, Florida, Ohio, Texas, Mississippi, Alabama, Illinois and New Jersey.

"Despite the lawsuits and deaths of police officers, Ford refuses to independently test their proposed fixes, refused to pay for the best fix available, and the fires continue," Diaz said.

Messages left at Ford's media relations office were not immediately returned Thursday. Ford has said the cars are safe and the lawsuits are meritless.

Ford has offered to pay for the installation of shields around the gas tanks on police Crown Victorias. It also announced in August that it would offer fire-suppression technology as an option on patrol cars in 2005 but could not retrofit existing models.

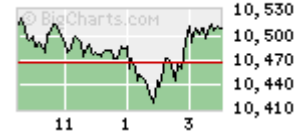
About 80 percent of U.S. police departments use the Crown Victoria, and there are an estimated 350,000 on the road.

A National Highway Traffic Safety Administration investigation concluded that vehicles with the Crown Victoria's fuel system caught fire 8 percent of the time in rear-end collisions, compared with 6.3 percent in the comparable Chevrolet Caprice.



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Dow Jones Industrial Avg.



DJIA	10,510.29	▲ 41.92
NASDAQ	2,068.23	▼ -9.14
S&P 500	1,134.11	▲ 5.63
CCL	44.39	▲ 1.65
AN	16.70	▼ -0.05
LEN	44.09	▲ 0.38

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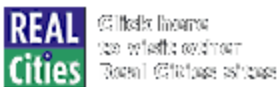
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