



**For Immediate Release**  
Thursday, March 4, 2004

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### **Dallas to Equip Police Cars with Fire Suppressant, Says Officer Safety Will Not Be Left to "Sheer Luck"**

DALLAS -- Dallas officials announced today they will install fire suppressant technology on the City's Ford Crown Victoria police cars and seek reimbursement from the Ford Motor Company, saying they will not leave the safety of police officers to chance.

"Any rear-end crash to a Ford police car holds the potential to create a fireball that could burn police officers and by-standers to death," said City Attorney Madeleine Johnson. "Call it sheer luck – or a miracle, if you will – but that night there was no spark to ignite the fuel. The next accident could be different. We cannot leave the safety of Dallas police and its citizens to luck."

"Dallas' Ford police cars have been involved in a number of high-speed rear crashes both before and after the tragic death of Officer Patrick Metzler in October 2002. An accident on Feb. 8, which involved six people, resulted in a massive gasoline spill that had to be mopped out of gutters by fire fighters," she said.

Dallas will begin retrofitting 775 active duty Ford Crown Victorias and retired police vehicles used by civilian employees by the end of the month, she said. The work should take about 30 days and cost the city about \$271,000, or about \$350 per car.

Dallas will buy a fire suppression product that uses a plastic panel filled with six pounds of fire suppression powder, which completely covers the rear of the fuel tank, between the tank and the rear axle. In a rear crash, the axle or other components would shatter the panel, releasing a cloud of powder which would mix with any fumes from gasoline leaking from the tank. The powder makes it impossible for any fumes to ignite. The technology is similar to that used by the military and in racing cars to prevent fires in the event of crashes.

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The city will ask Ford to reimburse the money as a necessary safety retrofit, Johnson said.

“We continue to believe that Ford has a duty as the nation’s primary supplier of police cars to manufacture them in such a way as to make them safe for routine police work, a large part of which puts them on roadways where they are targets for high speed vehicles,” Johnson said.

Ford’s attempt to shore up fuel tank protection by shielding certain components that could be puncture sources in crashes does not offer enough protection, Johnson added. Two Dallas police cars involved in high-speed, rear-end crashes resulting in fire or gasoline spills since the death of Officer Metzler in Oct. 2002, were equipped with Ford shields, she noted.

An analysis of the most recent crash on Feb. 8, showed two leak sources: around a valve at the top of the tank, and a puncture at the bottom of the tank that allowed the tank to drain completely. Firefighters had to use absorption equipment to mop the gutters of fuel.

The analysis further showed that the puncture was caused by a bracket that covers one of the straps holding the fuel tank in place. The puncture occurred in an area of the tank not protected by Ford’s retrofitted shield system.

Last July, the City of Dallas ran its own safety tests of the Ford Crown Victoria, concluding Ford’s second attempt at making the cars safer – a trunk lining to keep police equipment from puncturing the tank – created a whole new danger: the potential of massively splitting the fuel tank.

Ford roundly criticized the methodology used in these tests, claiming its own testing showed the trunk liner and other safety improvements prevented punctures up to 75 mph. However, later deposition testimony in ongoing lawsuits revealed that Ford never actually performed fuel system integrity crash tests on the trunk liner.

The City of Dallas is among dozens of cities and counties suing Ford over the safety of Crown Victoria police cars. An investigation in December by the Detroit Free Press found that 30 people, including 18 police officers, had died in fiery rear-impact crashes in the Crown Victoria.

Since 1999, there have been at least four Dallas Police Department Ford Crown Victorias involved in high speed rear crashes, including the one that took the life of Officer Metzler on Oct. 23, 2002.