

By Joe Benton
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Flaming Fords

Ford Motor Co. has ordered dealers to stop selling the new Super Duty pickup with the 6.4-liter diesel engine and is recalling more than 37,000 of the 2008 F-Series trucks after reported tailpipe fires in the diesel version of the pickups.

Ford has received three reports of flames shooting out of tailpipes after either fuel or oil leaked into an area of the exhaust system where diesel particulates are burned off to meet emissions requirements, according to a Ford spokesman.

In Texas, one Super Duty diesel's hot tailpipe set grass fire when the driver pulled off the road, according to Ford. The fire was quickly put out and no one was hurt.

"This is an important product for us and an important customer base, and we want to move swiftly to make sure this does not become a safety issue for our customers," Ford spokesman Dan Jarvis said.

The heavy-duty work truck is an important aspect of financial recovery at Ford as the automaker tries to pull itself out of \$12.7 billion in red ink from last year.

Ford dealers have an inventory on hand of roughly 29,000 Super Duty trucks with the 6.4-liter diesel engine. Sales of the hot selling truck will not resume until the engine control software can be updated.

The software upgrade resets the Super Duty powertrain control module on the Ford trucks to recognize improper levels of heat in the exhaust system. If heat is detected the system will power down the truck so the driver can pull to the side of the road and allow the truck to cool off.

Ford estimates the software can be modified during ten minute procedure. Super Duty trucks that have not been shipped from their assembly plant in Louisville, Kentucky will receive the engine control software update at the plant.

Customers with the first 8,400 diesel Super Duty trucks already on the roads will be notified that they should bring their vehicles into dealerships for the software update.

Ford will send out a recall notice to customers in April and dealers will contact consumers as soon as possible to warn them of the potential problem.

Gasoline-powered versions of the Super Duty and previous model-year diesel trucks with 6.0-liter or 7.3-liter engines are not affected by the recall.

Almost 70 percent of the Super Duty trucks sold are equipped with diesel engines.

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Flaming Fords - Consumer Affairs

Ford Motor Co. is recalling 155,000 pickup trucks and sport utility vehicles including 2003 F-150, F-250, F-350, F-450 and F-550 Super Duty truck, the Ford Excursion SUV and the Lincoln Blackwood pickup.

A faulty cruise control switch suspected of causing fires in older model Ford trucks is the reason for the latest recall.

The F-150 pickup is the top-selling vehicle in the U.S. F-Series trucks have faced soft sales in recent months however. Sales for the F-150 pickup were down nearly 12 percent in 2006 to nearly 800,000 vehicles.

Ford recalled 5.8 million vehicles in 2006 after a lengthy investigation by the national Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) because of engine fires linked to the cruise control systems in trucks, SUVs and vans.

The investigation concluded that brake fluid could leak through the cruise control's deactivation switch into electrical components and cause to corrosion which might lead to overheating and fire.

Ford officials now say an internal check discovered the same switch systems in some early 2003 trucks and SUVs.

NHTSA has received 1,472 complaints connected to the problems, including 65 reports of fires but the agency reports there are no confirmed deaths or injuries.

To fix the problem, dealers will install a fused wiring harness to the cruise control deactivation switch to prevent the risk of fire if the switch leaked.

Ford truck owners will receive notices in the mail next week and dealers will make the repairs at no cost to the owner. Customers can contact Ford at 1-866-426-7332

Feds Probe More Ford Fires

Ford Escape, Mazda Tribute Owners Report Blazes

Federal regulators at the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) are investigating complaints that some Ford Escape and Mazda Tribute SUVs have inexplicably caught fire.

The investigation involves more than 600,000 SUVs from the 2001-2003 model years. NHTSA has received eight complaints of engine fires around the antilock braking system's electronic control module.

The control module is an on-board diagnostic and control computer that monitors the braking system during normal driving conditions and when the antilock brakes are being used. The module is located in a circuit that is always powered regardless of whether the ignition is on or off.

Donna of Wake Forest, North Carolina, told the story of her Ford Escape catching fire to ConsumerAffairs.Com earlier this year.

"My family and I were awakened at about 5 in the morning to the smoke alarms in the house going off. We quickly looked for the cause and saw smoke coming from the downstairs," she wrote. Donna grabbed her two small children and ran outside to see her garage door popped open and her 2001 Ford Escape on fire.

"I yelled to my husband it was the car on fire. Earlier I had heard a boom but fell back asleep assuming it was lightning or a car backfiring. The fire department came and put the fire out but not before the damage was done to our home."

"The car had not been driven in 2 days," Donna wrote us.

Ford spokeswoman Kristen Kinley said there have been no reports of injuries linked to the fires and the automaker was cooperating with the agency's investigation.

"At this time it's too early in the investigation to speculate on the outcome," she said. Donna's Ford Escape was destroyed along with the contents of her garage, a refrigerator, mattress, lawn mower, and other lawn equipment as well as her children's outdoor toys. NHTSA reports that in five of the eight complaints the fires occurred in circumstances similar to the Wake Forest fire, with the vehicles parked and unattended. In two other cases, the agency received reports of smoke or melted electrical connectors and wiring near the antilock braking system in Escapes.

The Escape and Tribute SUVs are similar vehicles known as "twins" in the automobile industry.

The NHTSA investigation does not involve the Ford Escape Hybrid, which was first introduced in 2004 and is not connected to a two-year investigation of engine fires linked to the cruise control systems in Ford trucks, SUVs and vans. That investigation led to the recall of about 5.8 million Ford vehicles in 2005 and 2006.

The preliminary evaluation will review the frequency, scope and safety consequences of the alleged defect. Defect investigations can sometimes lead to vehicle recalls.