



Ford Motor Company Limited

Andy Barratt
Managing Director
Ford of Britain

Private and Confidential
FAO Mrs Heidi J Connor
Senior Coroner for Berkshire
Berkshire Coroner's Office
Reading Town Hall
Blagrave Street
Reading
Berkshire
RG1 1QH

18 December 2019

Dear Mrs Connor

Inquest touching the deaths of Catherine Gardiner, Jason Aleixo and Lorraine McLellan – Regulation 28, Prevention of Future Deaths

We refer to the Inquest into the tragic deaths set out above and to your Prevention of Future Deaths report dated 24 October 2019.

As you know, we have co-operated in full with both the police and your investigation into this accident. One of our senior engineers gave evidence at the Inquest, after another engineer from Ford had previously carried out an initial examination of the vehicle.

Background

Customer safety is our number one priority and we have comprehensive procedures in place to ensure that we design and then manufacture safe products. Our products are subject to regulatory scrutiny and approval. Achieving approval is based on both the finished product and many of its components achieving certain criteria which are set out in various quality standards. Compliance with those standards is verified by independent testing. Our quality control procedures are a strict requirement throughout our supply chain and we regularly audit our production facilities to ensure that standards are being maintained.

Further, we operate a policy of continuous improvement and we have a robust system of product surveillance in place. For all vehicles, we monitor their field performance using feedback from our customers and our dealer network. When we identify potential quality issues, we investigate the symptoms, establish the root cause, and develop in-production improvements. We may also carry out Field Service Actions (FSAs) to address these issues in respect of vehicles in service in order to maintain high degrees of customer satisfaction. If we identify a safety defect, we act quickly to address the safety of our customers. In such situations, Ford always cooperates fully with the relevant government agencies throughout Europe and complies with applicable legislation (e.g. the General Product Safety Regulations 2005 (SI 2005/1803) ("GPSR") in the UK) and official guidelines (e.g. the DVSA Code of Practice in the UK).

We receive information from a variety of sources, in particular via reports submitted by our dealer network, as part of their contractual obligations under the Dealer Agreement, via direct customer contact and via Government agencies.

As a volume manufacturer and retailer, maintaining high quality and safety standards is essential to the preservation of our customers' trust and our positive brand image. We take our responsibilities to our customers extremely seriously.

The Inquest

We have reviewed and considered all the evidence heard at the Inquest very carefully indeed. The initial review of the vehicle's diagnostic system provided no data about what could have gone wrong before the crash occurred.

Action taken since the Inquest

We have reviewed our product surveillance database to establish whether we have any record of other similar circumstances. In particular, we have looked for other occasions where vehicles have slowed down suddenly at high speed and have found none.

Further possible action

You have made clear that you are concerned about a risk of possible future deaths. Ford shares that concern and as explained above is constantly working to reduce risk in all of its products. You have asked us to consider conducting a forensic examination of the vehicle and report the results back to you. You have also asked us to consider the provision of a fault code in the engine diagnostic system to detect when the Dual Mass Flywheel ("DMF") protection system leads to engine shutdown.

We will undertake a forensic examination of the vehicle. We have therefore been liaising with the police with regard to potential dates and the police have in turn been in touch with and are co-ordinating practicalities with the other Interested Persons at the Inquest. We suggested dates from early January 2020 but the earliest dates convenient for all the parties are 25 and 26 February 2020.

In the meantime, we have been planning the examination, looking at the potential failure modes we will need to investigate, who will be in the team of specialist engineers and what equipment and facilities will be needed to conduct the examination. We have also been liaising with the police about the need for certain parts removed from the vehicle during the examination to be tested and examined by the original suppliers.

With regard to the provision of a fault code on the DMF protection system, we have started the process of considering this through the engineering team.

We will provide an update to you after the vehicle examination and will write by 27 March 2020.

Yours sincerely



Andrew Barratt
Managing Director
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