

RUGGED & RESPONSIVE OR LUCKY TO BE ALIVE?

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Detroit Free Press
Investigative Series

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October 18, 2003 – A view of the rear of the Boone Sheriff's Department patrol car after it was hit from behind by a passing motorist while the officer was helping investigate an accident.

69 PEOPLE HAVE DIED INCLUDING 18 OFFICERS

In a three-part investigative series published in December 2003, the Detroit Free Press newspaper documented that 69 people had died in fiery rear-end crashes in the Crown Victoria since the “Panther” platform was introduced in 1979. At least 18 officers have died as the result of Crown Victoria police car fires, more than reported by the government. Ford ignored police calls for help and recommendations for improving the cruiser’s safety for years before taking action. Since then, Ford’s “safety improvements” have failed to halt officer deaths, its shield retrofit is degrading and its crash test claims have proved to be false.

■ At least three deaths and many near misses have occurred involving Crown Victoria police cars equipped with Ford’s protective shields. In the latest incident, October 18, 2003, a Boone County, Iowa sheriff’s deputy was seconds from entering his parked patrol car when it was rear-ended by a passing motorist. In moments, the car was engulfed in flames. As is typical in these crashes, the impact jammed the cruiser’s doors shut. Thankfully, the officer was unhurt, but others have not been so lucky.

■ The tank shields are showing ominous signs of maintenance problems. In Nueces County, Texas, an inspection of Crown Victoria police cars in 2003 showed the tank shields (upgrade kits) on two vehicles had been damaged or deteriorated to the extent that their ability to stop fuel tank punctures had been compromised. Law Enforcement agencies should inspect vehicles and advise NHTSA of any problems.



The entire news series can be found on our website, www.CrownVictoriaSafetyAlert.com



Shield covering stabilizer bar shows damage

Location of Ford "shields" in upgrade kit

- Ford unveiled a new Trunk Pack in early 2003, yet later admitted in court testimony that it never crash tested the pack to determine its safety value. Crash tests by the city of Dallas in July 2003 showed while the packs prevent some punctures, they may also cause massive splitting of the fuel tank during a crash.
- Ford criticized the Dallas tests for welding puncture-producing police equipment inside the vehicles for testing purposes. Ford admitted in court testimony it also welded equipment into place when testing its shields.
- Ford continues to market Trunk Pack equipped Crown Victoria police cars as meeting a 75 mph rear crash standard. Yet in court testimony in 2003, it admitted it has never crash tested its trunk pack at 75 mph.

INDEPENDENT TESTS SHOW SAFETY POSSIBLE

Ford claims its Police Interceptor meets a 75 mph rear crash safety standard, citing a 2002 crash test.

However, according to actual test findings released by Ford's testing company, the target vehicle leaked 40 ounces of synthetic testing fluid after being struck – enough to create an inferno in a real world situation. A number of independently conducted crash tests, all using real gasoline, have shown how readily available technology can and should be installed on Crown Victoria police cars to protect officers from deadly fires. A look at these tests and their results:

TESTS OF CVPI AND TRUNK PACK

Date	CVPI Trunk Contents	Speed (MPH)	Ford Tests	Independent Tests
July 2003	Puncture-Producing Equipment <i>(City of Dallas Test No. 1)</i>	75 mph	No Comparable Test	Multiple Punctures
July 2003	Puncture-Producing Equipment, & Trunk Pack <i>(City of Dallas Test No. 2)</i>	75 mph	No Comparable Test	Fewer Punctures
July 2003	Puncture-Producing Equipment, Trunk Pack, & 200 lbs Sandbags <i>(City of Dallas Test No. 3)</i>	75 mph	No Comparable Test	Massive Split
Aug 2002	200 lbs Sandbags	75 mph	Leaked 40 Ounces	No Comparable Test

TESTS OF BLADDER TANKS AND FIRE PANEL

Date	CVPI Safety Add-ons	Speed (MPH)	Ford Tests	Independent Tests
Nov 2003	Without FIRE Panel* <i>(artificial puncture and ignition source)</i>	79 mph	No Comparable Test	Massive Fire
Nov 2003	With FIRE Panel* <i>(artificial puncture and ignition source)</i>	79 mph	No Comparable Test	No Fire
Sept 2003	Bladder Tank & Puncture-Producing Equipment <i>(Fuel Safe/KARCO)</i>	75 mph	No Comparable Test	No Leakage
July 2002	Bladder Tank & FIRE Panel <i>(Goodyear Aerospace)</i>	82 mph	No Comparable Test	No Leakage

* In these tests, Fire Panel was testing the effectiveness of the FIRE Panel at preventing fire when there was puncture, leakage and an ignition source. Therefore, the test plan included a planned, artificial puncture and ignition sources. The test without the FIRE Panel confirmed that the test set produced a major fire without FIRE Panel protection. Information provided by Fire Panel. Contact FIRE Panel (866-607-0747) for a copy of the November 2003 crash tests.

DALLAS TESTS SCIENTIFICALLY SOUND

FORD ALSO WELDED TRUNK EQUIPMENT TO TEST SHIELDS.

The purpose of the 2003 Dallas test was to determine if the Trunk Pack would prevent punctures and whether it would cause additional failures. The results were clear: The Trunk Pack did prevent some, but not all, punctures.

**2 OUT OF 3 FORD
EXPERIMENTAL TESTS
SHOWED FUEL TANK
PUNCTURES, ACCORDING
TO A FORD OFFICIAL'S
TESTIMONY.**

When it was loaded with up to 200 lbs. of weight, the tank split open along the seam weld.

The Dallas crash tests, conducted

by Transportation Safety Technologies, Inc., followed accepted industry testing standards. Objects known to be carried in police trunks and to have punctured fuel tanks in fatal fires were fixed into position, in part by welding, to assure that potential puncture sources would be forced against the tank and trunk pack in repeatable tests. Ford welded trunk equipment into place when testing its fuel

tank shields, according to recent deposition testimony. What Ford admits to under oath appears to be different than what it claims in marketing materials.



After the testing, Ford was invited to participate in the test analysis, but refused again. Finally, Ford was asked to perform a jointly conducted, public test of a fully loaded Trunk Pack and again refused.



Punctures clearly evident



Fuel tank splits along seam



Post test shows massive tank leak

FORD'S OWN TESTIMONY CONTRADICTS STATEMENTS ON TRUNK PACK TESTING.

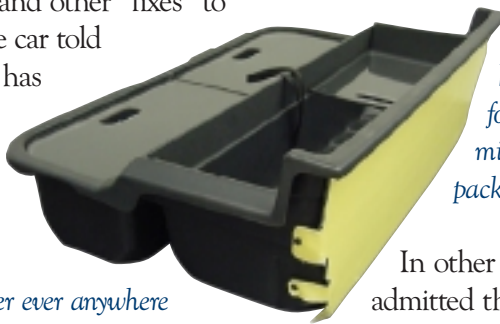
In a recent communication to police car purchasers, Ford claimed *"...three vehicle crash tests have been conducted at 75 mph with the Trunk Pack and representative police equipment with no fuel tank puncture resulting from the trunk equipment."*

On October 22, 2003, however, in sworn testimony, the head of Ford's Technical Task Force on the Trunk Pack and other "fixes" to the Crown Victoria police car told attorneys that Ford never has conducted fuel integrity tests of the Trunk Pack, and never has tested the Packs fully loaded.

Attorney: "...There has never ever anywhere been done by Ford any fuel system integrity crash test that you would represent to the public that is a 75 mile per hour fuel system integrity crash test on a CVPI equipped with a trunk pack?"

Ford: "No."

Attorney: "I want to know if Ford Motor Company has done any testing to determine if a trunk pack put in a Crown Victoria and loaded with 200 pounds of load is safe and does not cause fuel system integrity problems when hit in a 75 mile an hour hit?"



Ford: "We have not, nor I have not performed any testing for fuel system integrity at the 75 mile an hour crashes with a trunk pack, and 200 pounds of sand, no."

In other testimony, this Ford official admitted that non-fuel integrity tests of the Trunk Pack resulted in fuel punctures or tears in 2 out of 3 tests.

FORD MAKING DESIGN CHANGES IN 2004 AND 2005 MODELS

The Ford Crown Victoria Police Inceptor (CVPI) is the police car of choice for 85 percent of the law enforcement departments in this country. Although Ford keeps defending their CVPI as safe, the company is making safety design changes for both the 2004 and 2005 models. They will offer optional fire-suppression systems for its CVPIs starting in 2005 to help prevent deadly rear-impact fires.

The system would supplement a recently implemented safety-shield system in the 2004 models designed to keep the fuel tanks from being punctured by rear-axle and suspension components.

No cost estimate has been made for the system. According to a Ford spokesperson, the decision was made to make the system optional, because "not every police agency needs the extra crash protection."

This proven technology is available now and should be installed on all police cars on the road. Safety cannot wait. Ford also should make all safety equipment standard – we believe all police desire and deserve the safest patrol car possible.



LET US NOT FORGET THESE FORD CROWN VICTORIA POLICE INTERCEPTOR DEATHS & INJURIES.

March 5, 1981	Officer Ted Villemaire	Michigan	Fire/Burn Injuries
December 17, 1983	■ Officer Drew Brown	Georgia	Fire/Death
September 29, 1992	Sheriff Thomas Shelton	Tennessee	Fire/Injuries
November 13, 1992	■ Trooper Edward Truelove	Connecticut	Fire/Death
December 28, 1994	Trooper Joyce Roberson-Nowak	Ohio	Fire/Burn Injuries
February 9, 1996	■ Trooper Vincent Julia	Delaware	Fire/Death
April 13, 1996	Sgt. Thomas Ludford	Minnesota	Fire/Injuries
July 26, 1997	■ Trooper Robert Smith	Florida	Fire/Death
August 2, 1997	Officer Howard Kimble	Illinois	Fire/Burn Injuries
August 25, 1997	Officer Melanie Funk	Florida	Puncture/No Fire
December 28, 1997	Officer Tyrone Banks	Louisiana	Fire/Injuries
January 18, 1998	Officer Christopher Witte	Utah	Fire
May 19, 1998	■ Trooper Hung Le	Louisiana	Fire/Death
December 9, 1998	■ Officer Juan Cruz	Arizona	Fire/Death
July 26, 1999	■ Officer Steve Agner	Florida	Fire/Death
January 30, 2000	Officer Allen Neel	Texas	Fire/Injuries
February 18, 2000	■ Officer Floyd Fink	Arizona	Fire/Death
June 14, 2000	Deputy Brian Heller	Maryland	Fire/Death
July 26, 2000	■ Trooper Lynn M. Ross	Tennessee	Fire/Death
January 28, 2001	Officer Gerald Shea/Juan Rivera*	Massachusetts	Fire/Injuries
	<i>*(Serious burn injuries to passenger in CVPI)</i>		
March 25, 2001	Officer Brian Wittmer***	California	Puncture/No Fire
March 25, 2001	Trooper Martin Adams***	Texas	Puncture/No Fire
March 26, 2001	Officer Jason Schechterle	Arizona	Fire/Burn Injuries
May 15, 2001	Officers David Colborn & Ted Noel	Arizona	Puncture/No Fire
August 12, 2001	Officer Steven Linen	California	Fire/Non Fire Death
August 22, 2001	Edith Reagan*	Texas	Fire/Death
November 29, 2001	Officer Clinton Hunter	Texas	Fire/Non Fire Death
December 11, 2001	Benjamin Phelps**	Alabama	Fire/Deaths
March 9, 2002	Officer Earl Frazier***	Florida	Puncture/No Fire
May 29, 2002	■ Officer Jefferson Davis	Florida	Fire/Death
June 12, 2002	■ Officer Robert Nielsen	Arizona	Fire/Death
July 4, 2002	Officer Greg Abbott	Georgia	Fire/Injuries
August 5, 2002	Officer George Rought	New York	Fire/Injuries
October 23, 2002	■ Officer Patrick Metzler	Texas	Fire/Death
November 6, 2002	Officers Bermudez & Athan	California	Fire
December 5, 2002	Officer J. Fender	Florida	Puncture/No Fire
December 19, 2002	■ Officer Robert Ambrose	New York	Fire/Death
January 13, 2003	Trooper Rebecca Guterrez	Texas	Puncture/No Fire
May 3, 2003	Officers Dan Traver & Sam	Washington D.C.	Fire
May 17, 2003	Officer Harry Blust	Texas	Fire
May 22, 2003	■ Trooper Michael Newton/Michael Nolte*	Missouri	Fire/Death & Fire Injuries
	<i>*(Serious burn injuries to passenger in CVPI)</i>		
May 30, 2003	Officer Anthony Cogdill	North Carolina	Fire/Death
June 4, 2003	Deputy Jorge Cruz	Texas	Fire
October 18, 2003	Deputy Matt Dominick	Iowa	Fire

*Civilian in a CVPI

**CVPI purchased by civilians

***Produced by Ford (Chuck White Exhibit)

■ Officer died from the fire

WHAT NOW?

POLICE OFFICERS, VICTIMS AND FAMILIES OF VICTIMS
DESERVE A REAL COMMITMENT FROM FORD.

We continue to advocate for the use of readily available technology, as well as better policies, guidelines, legislation and testing, specifically:

- Bladders
- Fire suppression
- Trunk protection
- “Move Over” legislation
- Trunk-packing guidelines
- Changes in police “pull over” policies and practices
- 75 mph rear crash test standard for all police vehicles



Some police agencies across the country already have started to install these measures at their own expense. We believe Ford should bear all the expense of making its police cars safe.

For more information on the current state of the Ford Crown Victoria police car crisis or to register for email updates, visit: www.CrownVictoriaSafetyAlert.com

Crown Victoria Safety Alert

Law Enforcement Officers and Families Affected by the
Ford Crown Victoria Police Car Safety Defect