

*Ford Motor Company*

Susan M. Cieshka  
Vice President, Environmental & Safety  
Engineering

June 2, 2003

Madeleine Johnson  
City Attorney  
City of Dallas  
1500 Marilla, Room 7DN  
Dallas, Texas 75201

Re: City of Dallas' May 29, 2003 Letter

Dear Ms. Johnson:

The purpose of this letter is to respond to the City's May 29<sup>th</sup> letter to Ford Motor Company. The safety of the Crown Victoria Police Interceptor has been my top priority as Ford's Vice President of Environmental and Safety Engineering, so it is appropriate that I respond to your concerns. We have attempted to meet with the Dallas Police Department several times to discuss in detail our work on the CVPi but have been denied access and have been instructed to communicate only through legal counsel. That is regrettable because I believe we could have addressed concerns, as we have with dozens of departments nationally, by demonstrating both the outstanding safety record of the CVPi and the work we have done with the law enforcement community.

Ford values our decades-long relationship with the City of Dallas and the officers that protect the City. The Crown Victoria Police Interceptor has been the preferred choice of police officers nationwide due to the durability, performance and package features that satisfy the demanding requirements of police work. While all bid specifications for police vehicles contain dozens of police-specific requirements, nowhere is there a specification that the fuel system will never leak regardless of impact severity – and rightly so since such a demand is not realistic. However, your letter seems to indicate that that is now the City's expectation.

Ford does not believe that any vehicle manufactured by any company anywhere in the world can meet those expectations. Simply put, every vehicle known to Ford has a risk of a fuel leak and fire following extremely high-speed collisions. As long as drivers continue to strike stationary police vehicles at such high speeds, there will be fuel leaks, and in some instances,



fires. While our sympathies go out to those involved in these tragic accidents, neither Ford nor any other auto manufacturer can eliminate the risk of fuel leaks in high-speed accidents.

If the City intends to define requirements that are inconsistent with existing technology, Ford must regrettably inform you that we have no choice but to discontinue providing police pursuit vehicles to the City. In making your decision you should be aware that in September 2002, Ford and representative members of law enforcement jointly announced the results of the 90-day Police Officer Safety Action Plan, which included:

- The "Police Interceptor Package Upgrade Kit," installed at no cost, providing shields for certain vehicle components that could puncture the fuel tank in extremely high-speed rear impacts.
- Testing of the Upgrade Kit at 75 mph to confirm the ability of the Upgrade Kit to protect against identified fuel tank punctures in that crash mode.
- Recommendations for improved police procedures for both traffic stops and trunk packing (announced later).
- Development of an optional, drop-in Trunk Pack to store police equipment more safely.
- A dedicated website ([www.CVPI.com](http://www.CVPI.com)) for enhanced communications between Ford and the law enforcement community.

Then in October 2002, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration ("NHTSA") closed its yearlong investigation of the Police Interceptor without finding a defect. NHTSA's findings ([www.nhtsa.dot.gov/current/crownvic/index.htm](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/current/crownvic/index.htm)) included the following:

- The crash energy levels associated with rear-impact fuel tank failures in the Police Interceptors are significantly greater than the energy levels in the federal government's fuel system crash tests.
- Based on NHTSA's analysis of federal government accident data, the risk of fire per fatal rear crash in the Police Interceptor is comparable to similar vehicles, including a competitive police car.
- There have been numerous high-energy rear crashes involving Police Interceptors with little or no fuel loss and no fire.

You should also be aware that Ford has embarked on an intensive effort to develop the technologies best able to significantly reduce the already low risk of fire. For example, as part of Ford's commitment to law enforcement to advance the state of the art in fire suppression technology, Ford is taking the following steps:

- Ford has selected Aerojet as the fire suppression vendor with which Ford will jointly pursue further development of this promising technology for the police vehicle market.
- Aerojet's proposed fire suppression system uses a pyrotechnic gas generator to deploy a combination liquid fire suppressant and surfactant. A surfactant is used because it reduces the surface tension of the liquid fire suppressant, thereby enabling the liquid to spread more quickly and completely.



If the City remains dissatisfied with the efforts of Ford, the federal government, and representatives of law enforcement agencies around the country, and if the City insists on testing that is unrealistic and unprecedented in the auto industry, then Ford encourages the City to evaluate alternatives to the Police Interceptor. As the City embarks upon this evaluation, however, Ford urges the City to recognize the following points:

- The police vehicle you choose to replace the Police Interceptor should of course be tested to the same demanding levels you insist on for the Police Interceptor. As Ford understands your letter, that will involve at least 12 rear impact crash tests at 80 mph with a truck or SUV, and the City will not accept any fuel leaks in excess of one ounce "on impact."
- The competitors' police pursuit vehicles do not have rear-wheel drive or frame rails. Like most cars that do not have those attributes, the competitive police vehicles have fuel tanks located below the passenger compartment. Your letter indicates that crash testing should feature the "worst case" impact for that vehicle. Therefore, the City's chosen replacement police vehicle should be struck in that vehicle's worst-case impact--likely a side impact between the wheels, at high speed.
- As presented in Ford's presentation materials on the [www.CVPI.com](http://www.CVPI.com) website, there are 5-times more fatal glide impacts than rear impacts. Further, there are 10-times more fatal front impacts than rear impacts. Any testing program that fails to recognize that impacts occur from all angles, and that a vehicle and its safety performance cannot be defined by one collision mode, will provide incomplete and potentially misleading results.
- The Police Interceptor has a 5-star front- and side-impact crash rating from NHTSA. Because less than 1% of fatal accidents involve fire, you should be certain that your new vehicle meets or exceeds the performance of the Police Interceptor in these far more common collision modes.
- The durability, reliability and performance of the CVPI are best-in-class. Furthermore, rear-wheel drive enables officers to conduct pursuits more safely than front-wheel drive. The City's testing should recognize that rear-wheel drive, in the police pursuit application, improves safety on a daily basis within the Dallas Police Department. The City should consider consulting with the two law enforcement departments that perform independent vehicle testing, the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department and the Michigan State Police, to better understand the importance of vehicle performance in reducing accidents.

After the City has subjected competitive vehicles to the same demanding test protocol it is now requiring for the Police Interceptor, Ford is confident that Dallas will again conclude that the Police Interceptor is the safest, most appropriate vehicle for law enforcement use. If so, Ford would be pleased to consider renewing its business relationship with the City, provided that reasonable, practical and clearly understood vehicle expectations are established. Until that time, and in light of the City's stated expectations, Ford will not provide the City with any new Police Interceptors. Please understand that Ford regrets this difficult decision, and we hope that this timely notice will allow your department to plan accordingly.



There are many assertions in your letter that make reference to information "revealed in deposition testimony" that was actually presented at our September press conference and is available on our website, that misstate Ford's efforts or that cite as "experts" litigation consultants who have never designed any fuel system component on any production vehicle. This letter is not the appropriate forum to respond to these incomplete, argumentative claims, and I decline to do so.

At Ford Motor Company, we recognize the extremely difficult job law enforcement officers do every day and we have worked very hard to provide them with a tool to perform their duty safely. We believe we have taken actions to make a safe vehicle even safer, but there are limitations on technology. You understand these limitations when you purchase "bullet-proof" vests - they are not actually bullet-proof but rather bullet-resistant. They provide the maximum protection that technology allows to reduce the risk of injury - we have done the same with the CVPI and are proud of the excellent safety record in a very demanding market segment.

Please feel free to contact me if you would like to discuss further.

Sincerely,



Susan M. Cischke

cc: Mayor, City of Dallas  
Members of City Council, City of Dallas  
City Manager, City of Dallas

