Ford Recalls Escapes, Fusions For Engine Fire Risk

Tom Krisher, AP Auto Writer

DETROIT (AP) — Ford Motor Co. said Friday that it is recalling more than 89,000 new Escape SUVs and Fusion sedans because the engines can overheat and cause fires.

The recall affects vehicles from the 2013 model year with 1.6-liter turbocharged engines that were sold in the U.S. and Canada, the company said in a statement.

Ford says it's working on a fix and is asking owners to contact dealers, who will arrange for loaner cars at no charge until the repairs are made. The company says the engines can overheat and leak fluids onto hot parts, causing fires. Ford is trying to find out what causes the overheating problem.

It's the fourth recall in four months for the all-new Escape, a top seller for Ford in the important compact SUV segment of the market. The new 2013 version went on sale in the spring, and it already has had problems with coolant leaks, cracked fuel lines and carpet padding. Safety advocates say that more than three recalls in a car's first year are a sign of quality problems, although Ford has said previously that the recalls show it's moving quickly to address safety problems.

Ford spokesman Said Deep said the recall comes after the company received reports of 12 fires in Escapes and one in a Fusion. No injuries have been reported. Deep said he did not know what fluids are leaking.

Ford urged owners of the recalled vehicles to call dealers to get loaner cars. The cars can still be driven, but owners whose dashboard warning lights illuminate should pull off the road, turn off the engine and leave the vehicle, the company said.

"It is important that affected customers not ignore this recall and contact their dealer as soon as possible," Steve Kenner, director of Ford's Automotive Safety Office, said in the statement.

Escape and Fusion owners can find out more about the recall by going to Ford's website, www.ford.com [1] , and clicking "View Notices and Recalls" in the "Support" tab. Owners can type in the 17-digit vehicle identification number to see if their vehicles are included. They can also call Ford at (866) 436-7332 in the U.S. or (888) 222-7814 in Canada, Ford said in a statement.

The recall affects Fusions and Escapes with "SE" and "SEL" packages. Models with different engines don't have the problem and are not involved in the recall. About 73,000 Escapes and 16,000 Fusions are affected.

In September the company recalled 7,600 new Escapes to fix coolant leaks that can cause engines to overheat or catch fire. Those Escapes also have 1.6-liter four-cylinder engines. Plugs in the engine may not have been installed properly and can fall out while the motor is running. Coolant can leak and cause engines to overheat.

In July, the company recalled 11,500 Escapes to fix fuel lines that can crack, leak and cause fires. In the same month Ford recalled more than 10,000 of the vehicles to fix carpet padding that can interfere with braking.

Both the Fusion and Escape are among Ford's top-selling vehicles. So far this year, the Dearborn, Mich., automaker has sold nearly 220,000 Escapes and 207,000 Fusions, according to Autodata Corp. But many of those are from the previous model year and have different engines.

Both vehicles seat five. The 2013 Escape has a starting price of $22,470, while the Fusion starts at $21,700.

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[1] http://www.ford.com