IMPORTANT SAFETY NOTICE
1999-2003 Ford Windstar Minivans

Total LOSS of Steering Control

due to Front Sub-frame Lower Control Arm Mount Failure

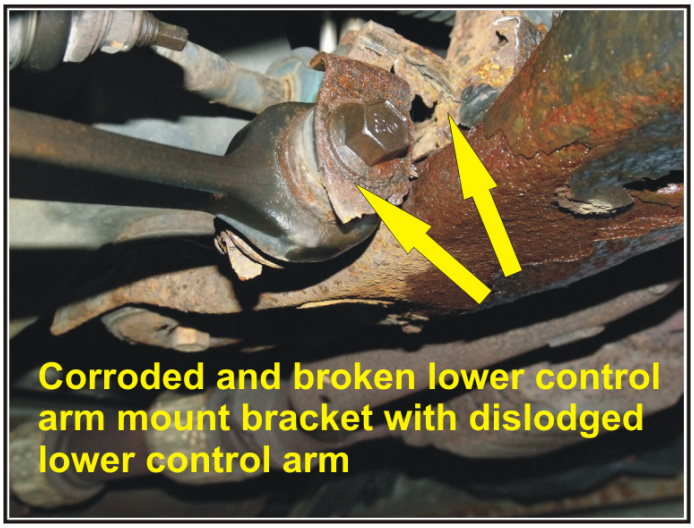
This notice has been issued in the interest of PUBLIC SAFETY by a concerned citizen who has personally experienced the catastrophic failure of the front sub-frame and subsequent complete loss of steering control on his "2003 Ford Windstar Limited". This notice is issued, without malice or prejudice, in hope that it will prompt Ford Motor Company of Canada Ltd. to respond to and take responsibility for this serious product defect with greater interest and concern than they have thus far demonstrated. *Cambridge, Ontario Sept.14,2010*

The Issue

All owners of 1999-2003 Ford Windstar minivans should be aware of a potentially life-threatening defect that can result in the **total loss of steering control**. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) in the United States, Transport Canada and Ford Motor Company in both the United States and Canada are aware of this issue. In fact, the NHTSA has now expanded its investigation of corrosion-related rear axle failures on 1999-2003 Ford Windstar minivans to include the similar failure of the front sub-frame.

The Problem

This front sub-frame failure is similar to the corrosion-related failure (cracking and breakage) of the 1999 to 2003 Windstar rear axles, for which Ford is about to issue a recall. The front sub-frame, which supports the vehicle's engine, transmission and lower suspension control arms, is corroding and being seriously weakened, particularly in the area of the right (passenger) side lower control arm mounting bracket. When this control arm mount breaks (which it will), the control arm detaches from the sub-frame, at which point **all steering control is lost**. The movement of the affected wheel, away from the sub-frame, may also pull the half-shaft (drive shift & CV joint) out of the transmission housing, effectively eliminating any forward or reverse drive to the wheels. The photographs below depict and explain the cause and results of this potentially catastrophic structural failure.



Ford's Response

In response to notification of the failure of the front sub-frame on this vehicle, and this customer's request that Ford Motor Co. (Ford of Canada) replace the defective sub-frame free of charge, a Ford customer relations representative advised this vehicle owner that Ford has no existing recall, extended warranty, or special-circumstance program addressing this issue and will not, therefore, assume responsibility for the cost of repairing the vehicle.

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What You Can Do (Should Do)

If you are the owner of a 1999 to 2003 Windstar minivan, and reside in a region that employs road salt, you should, immediately, have your vehicle's front sub-frame inspected by a qualified Ford service technician for signs of corrosion around the lower control arm mounts, particularly the right (passenger) side mount.

If you have already experienced a failure of the lower control arm mount on your 1999-2003 Ford Windstar, and have not reported the incident, notify the proper authorities. In the United States, contact the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). In Canada, contact **Transport Canada, Safety & Defects Investigations** at **1-800-333-0510** or complete the on-line defect complaint form at https://wwwapps.tc.gc.ca/Saf-Sec-Sur/7/PCDB-BDPP/Index.aspx

It is the writer's opinion that the corrosion and subsequent failure of a critical structural component, such as a sub-frame, should not be subject to or limited within any manufacturer's normal vehicle warranty. It should be acted upon immediately by way of recall, extended warranty or a special circumstance program --- **BEFORE SOMEONE IS KILLED!**

The Bottom Line

The failure of the sub-frame on the vehicle pictured in this document occurred at very low speed, in a parking lot, and did not result in the driver losing control of the vehicle. Should such a failure occur at speed on any road or highway, however, it will result in the total loss of steering control and the potential for a very serious and possibly deadly accident. For your own safety and that of others with whom you share the road, please have the sub-frame on your 1999-2003 Ford Windstar inspected immediately.

The following is an excerpt from a publically available document posted by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's Office of Defects Investigation (ODI) on the NHTSA website. This document is dated July 30, 2010. If you are an OWNER OF A WINDSTAR and your Windstar has suffered a sub-frame failure, please contact the NHTSA, or Transport Canada, and report the incident. The greater the number of reports received, the faster Ford will respond (or be forced to respond) with an official recall.

"ODI has received 87 complaints alleging corrosion related failures of the front sub-frame in model years 1999 through 2003 Ford Windstar minivans. The corrosion allegedly occurs on the right side, in the area where the lower control arm is attached to the sub-frame. Many of the complaints allege that a failure occurred while the vehicle was in motion resulting in a loss of vehicle control. Several of these complainants alleged that the failure resulted in either a crash or the vehicle running off the road. In addition, several complainants indicated detachment of the drive axle (half shaft) from the transmission, which may occur when a lower control arm mount separates and causes the wheel to pull free from the drive axle. This would result in a loss of motive power and a disabled vehicle. Several complaints indicated there were no warnings prior to any of the aforementioned failures. The majority of the complaints (85 of 87) were from "Salt-Belt" states. A Preliminary Evaluation has been opened to assess the scope, frequency and safety consequences of the alleged defect in the subject vehicles."

These additional photos and notations are provide for those interested in knowing more about this defect. **ARE YOU PAYING ATTENTION MR. FORD?**