



Ford says no to Niles cruiser paint repairs

niles police department

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Company says vehicles are outside the extended warranty

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NILES

Ford Motor Co. has no intention of fixing 14 Niles police cruisers with extreme flaking and paint peeling despite a request for help from police Chief Robert Hinton.

The decision comes despite a purported history of paint issues in the last 10 years with the Crown Victoria model that Niles and other police departments use.

“We have determined that all of these vehicles are outside the extended warranty, so that is why there is no financial assistance,” said Elizabeth Weigandt, Ford dealer communications manager. Weigandt said the decision was made by the “Ford Customer Care Team,” but was unable to provide information about the size and composition of the team when contacted Tuesday by The Vindicator.

“We just spent \$107,252 and took delivery on four 2015 Ford SUVs,” Hinton said. “You would think they would be more interested in resolving this.”

Hinton had sent a letter to Ford on Dec. 16 asking the company for “some type of assistance to remedy this problem.” He noted that Ford Crown Victorias from the 2007 and 2008 model years continue to flake and peel despite local efforts to repair them.

Hinton revealed that shortly after media accounts of his cruiser difficulties, he was contacted by a former Ford consultant on automotive paint durability who told him that Crown Victoria models from that era have a history of paint issues.

Stephen Gaiski, who now runs his own company in the Detroit area, said he had performed an analysis at the request of Ford and found that the prime layer of the paint was not meeting Ford specifications.

“This is a defined characteristic and the flaking that is happening on the Crown Victorias is an example of thin prime,” Gaiski told The Vindicator. “Only 12 percent of Crown Victorias produced at Ford’s St. Thomas [Ontario] plant met paint specifications.” Ford closed the plant in 2011.

Gaiski said Ford terminated its business relationship with him after he submitted his report even though he had developed a paint-analysis durability technology that Ford and other automakers were using.

Ford’s Weigandt said she was unaware of the allegations of faulty paint applications. In 2011, however, an NBC News investigative unit in Chicago reported similar problems with Crown Victorias from the last decade. Ford issued a technical service bulletin when similar problems were reported with police cruisers “in dozens of cities,” according to the NBC unit.

At the time of the report, a Ford representative declined to comment on Gaiski’s allegations.

Niles is not the only Ohio police department experiencing paint problems with Ford Crown Victorias. Gaiski said the same issue surfaced in Elyria, but was not rectified by the company.

“The news media was able to get a local dealership to repaint their vehicles,” he said.

Hinton said he has no intention of letting the matter drop.

“I’m going to take this information and send them another letter,” he said. “I’m going to try to get them to change their minds.”