



U.S. Department
of Transportation
National Highway
Traffic Safety
Administration

ODI RESUME

INVESTIGATION: PE00-020 DATE OPENED: 2-MAY-00
 SUBJECT: Tire Tread Separation/Tire Failure
 PROMPTED BY: IE 00-024, Consumer complaints

PRINCIPAL ENGINEER: Terri Droneburg
 (202) 366-6617
 MANUFACTURER: Firestone
 TIRE MODEL(S): ATX, ATX II, and Wilderness
 TIRE MODEL YEAR(S): To be determined
 TIRE POPULATION: To be determined

PROBLEM DESCRIPTION: Consumers allege tire tread separation or failure while driving at highway speeds.

FAILURE REPORT SUMMARY

	ODI	MANUFACTURER	TOTAL
COMPLAINTS:	90	unknown	90
CRASHES:	33	unknown	33
# INJURY CRASHES:	17	unknown	17
# INJURIES:	27	unknown	27
# FATAL CRASHES:	4	unknown	4
# FATALITIES:	4	unknown	4

ACTION: Open a Preliminary Evaluation.

ENGINEER: [Signature]
5/2/00
 DATE

DIV CHF: [Signature]
May 2, 2000
 DATE

OFC DIR: [Signature]
5/2/00
 DATE

SUMMARY:

ODI is aware of 90 complaints on subject Firestone ATX, ATX II, and Wilderness tires alleging either tread separation or blowout. The details of most incidents have been identified; however, some specifics are still unknown. ODI is continuing to gather information about these, and other, incidents.

Most drivers report that they were driving at highway speeds when suddenly they lost control. Some drivers heard a loud noise seconds before the loss of control, but others heard nothing. Those that did hear a noise often reported that the loss of control occurred so quickly they were not able to avoid a collision. Over 30 percent of the drivers did not recover from the loss of control and crashed.

After analyzing complaints and contacting consumers, ODI knows of 65 consumers alleging a complete (61) or partial (4) tire tread separation occurred on a subject tire. An additional 17 allege a blow out occurred, which may or may not have been preceded by a tread separation. The remaining eight indicate unspecified tire failures. Twenty-eight of the drivers who experienced an alleged tread separation noted that the tire remained inflated, often after a subsequent crash. In fact, 22 of the 28 cases, resulted in a crash. In two of these crashes, the tread wrapped itself around the rear axle, allegedly causing a wheel lockup and the resultant crash.

Forty-one of the complainants reported a tire tread separated while traveling at speeds ranging from 50 to 75 mph, with 70 mph being the most commonly reported speed, cited by 18 drivers.

The subject tires were installed as original equipment (OEM) on certain Ford Explorer, Ranger, and F150 vehicles (among others) and were also available as replacement tires for these and other vehicles. Forty-one reports allege that an OEM tire failed and ten owners claim the failure involved a replacement tire.

ODI has documented 34 crashes with 21 resulting in an injury or death. In many cases, more than one occupant was injured in the crash (i.e., 27 injuries resulted from 17 of the crashes). Many of the injuries were relatively minor (i.e., lacerations, scrapes, and a bloody nose). However, 5 of the reports involved severe injuries including head trauma and broken bones. The remaining four crashes resulted in one occupant fatality each.

Finally, a strong geographical trend is noted at this time. Forty-three complaints are from Texas with over 80% of the balance involving Arizona, Florida, Alabama, Louisiana, South Carolina, Nevada, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Utah, and southern California.