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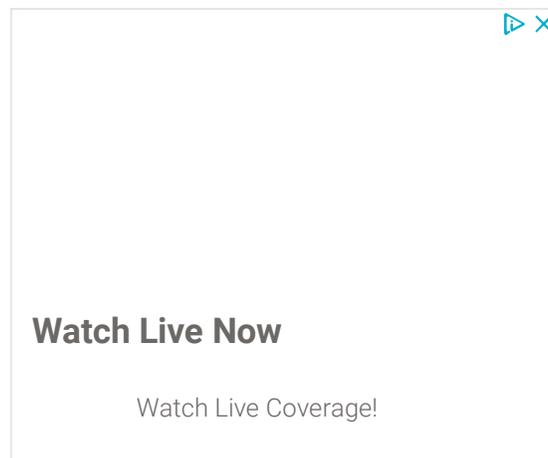
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## Police embarrassed by peeling paint on cars

NILES – Police Chief Robert Hinton said he is embarrassed by the flaking paint on nearly half of his police vehicles and he is letting the Ford Motor Co. know about it.



Hinton this week sent Ford a letter complaining that the paint on 14 of his police vehicles has been peeling off at an alarming rate over the last year.

“These vehicles have continued to experience extreme flaking and peeling of the paint over the last year,” Hinton wrote in the letter. “The vehicles have been serviced for the recalls pertaining to this problem. However, (the vehicles) continue to peel and flake.”

Hinton said the age of the cars having peeling paint problems range from a 2001 to several 2008 Crown Victorias. There are various degrees of peeling on the cars.

“I do not believe it is a problem that stems from the age of the vehicles,” Hinton said. “We have 1999 police cars that are not experiencing this kind of paint peeling. I have seen some cars in the general public that are 15 to 20 years old which have original paint jobs that have left them in better condition.”

The Ford Motor Co. was not reached for comment Friday. Hinton does not know what is causing the cars to peel.

“We have had our officers wash their vehicles with a regular, non-pressurized hoses and have seen sheets of paint coming from the cars,” he said. “It was like snow falling from the cars in the middle of the summer.”

Hinton said the problem with peeling paint has been particularly noticeable over the last year. The peeling on some cars are to the gray undercoating. On others, the peeling is to the point where the cars are rusting.

“If this was one or two of our cars, I would understand, but this represents nearly 45 percent of our whole fleet,” Hinton said. “I don’t know what Ford will do, but the company should be aware the situation.”

In his letter, Hinton wrote, “We are hopeful that the Ford Motor Company can offer some type of assistance to remedy this problem and to restore these police vehicles back to a condition that the Niles Police Department and the Ford Motor Company would be proud of to represent this community.”

Although frustrated that the paint on these vehicles are peeling, Hinton said the mechanical conditions of the vehicles are excellent.

“I have no complaints about the vehicle’s mechanics,” Hinton said.

The department, in fact, is purchasing four new SUVs from Ford at a cost of \$26,813 each or a total of \$107,252.

The price does not include specialized equipment for police vehicles, including light bars, radios, computers, or mounts for weapons. Some of the equipment may be taken from older police cars and placed into the new SUVs.

The SUVs were ordered on Oct. 29. They are being paid for with money in the city's general fund. The department also is purchasing a used unmarked vehicle for its detective division. It is being paid for with money the department earned through the seizures.

The four SUVs will will replace four 1999 Crown Victorias.

Hinton said he decided to get SUVs because they have more interior room and they are higher off the ground.

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