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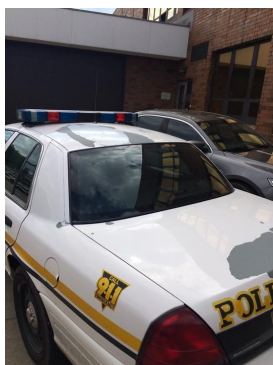
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Peeling paint on cruisers angers local police

May 13, 2015: Local police complain about peeling paint on cruisers but can't get help from Ford. WKYC-TV

Alyssa Raymond, WKYC-TV 12:13 a.m. EDT May 14, 2015



(Photo: Massillon Police Department)

ELYRIA, Ohio -- Elyria Police Chief Duane Whitely said it best. "The police car is a reflection of the city. You don't want a car that looks bad."

But Chief Whitely admits that many of Elyria's police cars don't reflect an image deserving of the city and its citizens.

The Crown Victorias that make up the Elyria Police fleet must last 10 to 15 years. Tight budgets and responsibility to taxpayers dictate that the vehicles are well-maintained inside and out.

But in 2010, the paint started peeling off of 18 of the Ford vehicles. They weren't small imperfections but, in many cases, large sheets of paint began peeling off the hood, roof, trunk and parts of the doors. Some cars were worse than others.

The Elyria Police Department reached out to Ford headquarters, only to be told the paint was out of warranty on the vehicles.

Repainting the fleet would cost Elyria taxpayers \$25,000. A local Ford dealer stepped up and paid for the police cars to be repainted by a nearby body shop. Chief Whitely remains grateful for their assistance. His department only paid for the paint, which cost taxpayers \$12,000 for the 18 vehicles.

That was 2011. The paint didn't last and it's now peeling again.

Eighty miles to the east, the Niles Police Department was also beginning a battle with Ford. Fourteen of its cruisers are peeling badly as well.

"It's an embarrassment really to drive around like this," Captain Mark Thou said, as he showed us Niles' peeling fleet.

Police Chief Robert Hinton sent a letter to Ford on Dec. 16, 2014. In it, he complained that the paint has been peeling off the vehicles at an alarming rate in the last year.

"It is most unfortunate that the vehicles which our officers patrol in on a daily basis do not project a positive image for the Niles Police Department or the Ford Motor Company," Hinton wrote. "We're not asking for something for nothing. Just here's your product. It's defective in some way. Help us out,"

Captain Thou said, of the message Niles was trying to send Ford. But, just as in the case of Elyria, Niles, also got a "no" from the Ford Motor Company.

WKYC reached out to Ford Headquarters asking for comment. We received this response via email from Elizabeth Weigandt, a Communications Manager at Ford Motor Company:

"I'm aware that our Ford Customer Service team notified the Niles Police Department that their vehicles did not qualify for warranty assistance. If the Elyria department has received the same notification, it would apply there as well. Ford is absolutely committed to top quality and customer satisfaction. We recommend that customers with any questions on our products either contact their dealer directly or visit Owner Support at [Ford.com \(http://www.ford.com/\)](http://www.ford.com/) or call 1-800-392-3673. That is all we can share at this time."

It's not just police cars that are affected.

A Google search on "Ford and "peeling paint" returned more than 70,000 results. And several Facebook pages are dedicated to consumers complaining about peeling and blistering paint on Ford and Mercury vehicles, including Expeditions and Explorers, as well as other models.

Detroit chemical engineer and former consultant to the car industry Steve Gaiski says there are two separate problems causing paint to peel from Ford vehicles. [Gaiski met with WUSA \(/story/news/2015/05/07/ford-blistering-bubbling-peeling/70912214/\)](http://www.wusa.com/story/news/2015/05/07/ford-blistering-bubbling-peeling/70912214/), our Gannett sister station, earlier this month.

According to Gaiski, one problem is thin paint. He traces it to the e-coat applied in the factory. Gaiski says his studies have shown the layer applied on some vehicles is too thin. Repainting won't help, unless the problem with the e-coat is fixed.

Gaiski believes this is why Elyria's repainted cars peeled too. Gaiski also believes this is the problem Niles is facing as well. Gaiski says Elyria and Niles are far from alone. "We are being contacted by police departments for assistance on this but police departments are very reluctant to file a claim against Ford. I don't know how they're getting away with it," Gaiski said, of the automaker.

The other problem, Gaiski says, is iron contaminants embedded in the vehicle panels. The only solution to fix the problem in these cases is to replace the affected panels.

Gaiski investigates cases like these all over the United States.

"Goodness gracious, we've been involved in New Jersey, California....14 states," he says. Gaiski maintains the problem is not just with Ford. Other automakers have faced the same complaints, but none have fielded as many as Ford. Gaiski's firm [Zestar \(http://www.zestar.com/\)](http://www.zestar.com/) is paid to document problems on Ford, and even he authored a book on factory paint problems.

A search on [SaferCar.gov \(http://www.safercar.gov/\)](http://www.safercar.gov/), which is maintained by the National Highway Transportation and Safety Administration, finds a technical service bulletin issued on the Ford Crown Victoria peeling paint problem. The bulletin says the "paint may not have been applied properly" on some Crown Victorias.

For Ford owners in the same boat as the Niles and Elyria police departments, you should first check on your vehicle paint warranty, and work through your dealer if the paint is still under warranty.

Is there help for customers whose paint is out of warranty? We posed the question to Gaiski, who offered the following:

Action Items for customers with thin paint

1. Request Paint Durability Data from Ford or Dealer

Paint Durability Data is the individual paint thickness measurements of the 4 layers (e-coat, prime, base, clear) that comprise the vehicle finish.

Refer to Ford's publicized paint thickness standard of 105 microns (http://www.ncms.org/wp-content/NCMS_files/sustainability/2012Sustainability/amPresentations/1130_Weingartz_NCMS_Roundtable_2012.pdf) on page 18 of attachment.

2. If Ford or the Dealer indicates not available from factory:

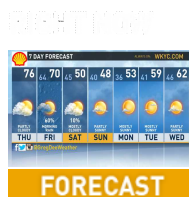
Request from Dealer that Ford sends a Customer Service Rep to take paint thickness measurements of the individual layers in front of the vehicle owner.

If greater than 10 percent of all thickness measurements per layer is below specification, it is classified as a Factory Paint Defect

3. If Ford or the Dealer refuses to Repaint after it's identified as a Defect, owners have initiated Small Claims Action without the use of an attorney.

While preparing our story for air, WKYC heard of another police department with paint problems on its Crown Victorias.

We spoke to Sgt. Brian Muntean, of the Massillon Police Department. He sent us pictures of several Massillon cruisers. The vehicles in question are model years 2010 and 2011. Massillon pulled several out of service because of their appearance, but three remain on the road. Muntean told WKYC Channel 3 by phone he was not aware of paint problems with Crown Victorias in other Ohio police departments.



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