

# **Simmons Hanly Conroy files Class Action complaint against Ford Motor Co. over large glass panoramic sunroofs**

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NEW YORK (Sept. 19, 2016) – **Simmons Hanly Conroy**, one of the nation’s largest law firms focused on consumer protection and mass tort actions, last week filed a class action complaint in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of California against Ford Motor Company alleging that large glass panoramic sunroofs on some Ford vehicles have spontaneously shattered. Simmons Hanly Conroy is co-counsel in the case with Greg Coleman Law PC of Knoxville, Tenn., a prominent class action firm.

The lawsuit claims that the shattering sunroofs pose a serious safety issue because many drivers report that the startling effect of the glass explosion causes accidents or near-miss accidents in addition to some drivers and passengers being cut by falling glass. According to the complaint, “The shattering events are so powerful that startled drivers compare it to the sound of a gunshot, after which glass fragments rain down upon the occupants of the vehicle, sometimes while driving at highway speeds.”

The action seeks national and state class certification, injunctive relief, and damages on behalf of plaintiffs and others who bought or leased a Ford, Lincoln, or Mercury vehicle with a sunroof that spontaneously shattered.

“We trust that the vehicles we choose to drive will keep us and our families safe from accidents, including those caused by defects that car manufacturers have incorporated into their automobiles,” said Simmons Hanly Conroy Shareholder Paul Hanly, lead counsel for the plaintiffs in this case. “Car manufacturers must be held accountable for defects that contribute to accidents and injury to drivers of their vehicles.”

At least 70 owners of Ford vehicles have reported to the National Highway Traffic and Safety Administration (NHTSA) that at least 80 panoramic sunroofs have shattered. The complaint alleges Ford has known about this problem since at least 2008 due to complaints to the NHTSA about defective sunroofs shattering in the Ford Edge. Ford has been the subject of an ongoing investigation by the NHTSA on this issue since May 2014.

Hanly added, “While several other automakers, including Volkswagen and Hyundai, have initiated voluntary recalls on their vehicles experiencing the same sunroof-shattering defect, Ford continues to deny owner and lessor warranty claims, much less to institute a recall of these defective vehicles.”

According to the complaint, sunroofs began evolving in the mid-2000s from what were modestly sized portions of the roof over the driver and front passenger seats, to those that cover almost the entire roof. The expanded sunroofs have posed new and significant engineering challenges because the required tempered glass plates take up much of the surface area of the vehicle’s roof, requiring precision in strengthening, attachment and stabilization. Ford has sold at least a million vehicles with the panoramic sunroof, often called the Vista roof, in the United States since 2007. Marketed as a luxury upgrade, the high-cost, panoramic sunroof option attracted the plaintiffs in this case, as well as others, to buy or lease Ford vehicles over less expensive models without the “glass roof.”

The case is Douglas Krebsbach, et al. v. Ford Motor Company, Cause No. 2:16-at-01154; In the District Court for the Eastern District of California. The named plaintiffs in the case are Douglas and Kathleen Krebsbach of Folsom, Calif., and James and Martha Alexander of Foley, Ala.

Simmons Hanly Conroy also is involved in pending litigation against Volkswagen on behalf of several thousand plaintiffs who were affected by the German automaker’s recent emissions scandal. In addition, Simmons Hanly Conroy Shareholder Jayne Conroy served as a member of the Lead Counsel Committee for Economic Loss Claims for the MDL involving the Toyota Motor Corp. unintended acceleration litigation.