**Ford Warns Against Fitting Non-Approved Accessories**

* The fitment of aftermarket accessories and non-approved modifications to vehicles may affect the manufacturer’s warranty, but could also pose a major safety risk
* Original equipment (OE) parts and accessories have been evaluated through rigorous testing and development, and are professionally fitted – neither of which are guaranteed with aftermarket items
* Imitation grilles, body conversions, performance tuning, suspension lift/lowering kits and lighting systems may compromise driving safety, cause premature failure of components, and may even be illegal in South Africa

**PRETORIA,** **South Africa, 2 September 2020** – A vehicle is usually more than simply a means of transport, and is often an expression of the owner’s unique personality and lifestyle. Accordingly, many motorists are turning to customisation to personalise their vehicles to suit their specific needs, or stand out from the crowd. However, the fitment of aftermarket accessories and non-approved modifications to the vehicle may not just impact the manufacturer’s warranty, but could also pose a major safety risk.

“We are seeing a significant increase in the number of aftermarket accessories being fitted to Ford Rangers and Everests recently, from grille replacements to body kits, which are a major concern for us,” says Neale Hill, MD of Ford Motor Company of Southern Africa (FMCSA). “While we appreciate the desire of enthusiastic owners to make their vehicles unique, it has major implications for the performance, reliability and safety of the vehicle.

“Ford spends an inordinate amount of time and money developing every aspect of its products, with millions of actual and accelerated kilometres of testing completed before any new vehicle is signed off and goes into production,” Hill explains. “Our standard four-year/120 000km manufacturer’s warranty is our guarantee that we are confident in the quality and workmanship of all aspects of the vehicle. Should there be a failure within the warranty time and mileage limits that is unrelated to wear and tear, Ford will honour the warranty by repairing or replacing the component.”

However, aftermarket accessories that have not been tested by Ford, and are thus not approved as original equipment (OE) items, haven’t been exposed to the same rigorous evaluations and proven under the most extreme conditions, ranging from sub-zero tests in the coldest climates to searing desert heat. Additionally, if the fitment is not done by fully trained and accredited Ford technicians, there’s no guarantee of the quality of workmanship.

Fitting these non-approved accessories, therefore, could result in premature failure of certain components, which could land up being a costly exercise as it may affect the vehicle’s warranty, leaving the owner to cover the repair bills. Even more concerning is the risk it potentially poses to the driver and passengers, as well as other road users.

One such example is the imitation Ford Ranger Raptor or F-150 Raptor grilles, which are typically seen as simply a cosmetic change. “The grille of the vehicle is carefully designed to manage the air flow characteristics through the radiator and engine bay, which is critical to the vehicle’s cooling and performance,” Hill points out. “An aftermarket grille could lead to increased air temperatures in the engine bay, which has an adverse effect on numerous mechanical and electrical components, dramatically increasing the risk of premature failure.”

The more extreme modifications such as body panel changes, suspension lift or lowering kits and performance tuning aggravate the situation further. Even the fitment of additional lighting kits, such as LED light bars, can impede the vehicle’s cooling performance and compromise the integrity of the electrical system. It’s also important to note that the fitment of many of these additional light systems is in fact illegal in South Africa.

“We encourage Ford owners to carefully consider any modifications they wish to do to their vehicles, and discuss this with a Ford dealer,” Hill says. “We offer a range of Ford-approved accessories that meet the required specifications, and can be ordered as factory-fitted items, or professionally installed after purchase by a Ford dealer.”

**The possible effects of vehicle modifications**

Aftermarket accessories that affect the vehicle’s cooling, air intake system, electronics, mechanical components, wheels/tyres not as per specification, as well as the sheet metal and paint work, including drilling and sticking of accessories, could all have a negative impact with regards to the quality of the vehicle.

* Performance enhancements such as aftermarket engine tuning, which is the process of modifying the operating characteristics of an engine by increasing the air to fuel ratio, results in increased engine and engine bay temperatures. This causes the vehicle to move away from its design intent, which may cause additional engine strain and premature wear and tear that in turn aggravates engine failures
* Vehicle chipping affects the engine’s performance and also has legislative implications related to the vehicle’s emissions. Chipping devices claim to improve engine performance with better fuel efficiency, but they do not take into account additional wear and tear on engine and drivetrain components. The reality is that such devices result in components experiencing duty cycles that are at the top end or even exceed their nominal design criteria. This includes the lubrication used and developed specifically for specific engines. The net effect is that such devices and interventions may ultimately lead to premature failure
* Electrical modifications such as adding higher wattage light bulbs, tapping into existing wiring and installation of High Intensity Discharge (HID) or LED aftermarket kits cause negative effects with regards to the operational integrity of the electrical operating system of the vehicle. Electrical systems only allow a certain voltage output and current draw that have been designed into the components. The increased demand on these components can result in the overcurrent protection being activated where applicable and/or cause malfunction in other instances. The fitment of additional lighting kits, as well as replacement light clusters that do not conform to the original equipment manufacturer (OEM) specification and have not been locally homologated, may be illegal
* Suspension lift/lowering kits and wheels with incorrect tyre sizes (whether bigger or smaller) can result in extra strain being applied on the suspension components, drive shafts, wheel bearings and related components. The vehicle therefore moves away from its original design intent. A high-lift suspension is likely to affect the vehicle’s handling, and may result in a greater risk of roll-over – especially when heavily laden
* Aftermarket bumpers and bullbars that are not manufacturer-approved and have not been homologated, may dramatically impact the performance of the vehicle’s active and passive safety features during a collision – including the deployment of potentially life-saving airbags. Similarly, aftermarket grilles, bonnets and fenders could have dire consequences in terms of the crash performance of the vehicle
* The fitment of canopies and roller shutter systems can damage the load box if not installed properly – particularly those that have not been homologated for use in South Africa. The correct installation points and brackets must be used, as per Ford’s body fitment guidelines, and owners are advised to fit manufacturer-approved systems through a Ford dealer or accredited fitment centre

Ford-approved accessories can be found via the following links to our website:

Ranger: <https://www.ford.co.za/commercial/new-ranger/accessories/>

Everest: <https://www.ford.co.za/suvs/everest/accessories/>

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Read the latest news from Ford South Africa by visiting the Newsroom:

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