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

DOT Auto Safety Hotline

Vehicle Owner's Questionnaire

To Report Vehicle Safety Defects
1-888-DASH-2-DOT
(1-888-327-4236)
INTERNET:www.nhtsa.dot.gov/hotline

FOR AGENCY USE ONLY 252

Date Received	Repository
2004 JAN 15 AM 8:47	☐
04-NOV-2003	Reference No. 10046365

OWNER INFORMATION (Type or Print)

Name	[redacted]	Daytime Telephone Number	E-mail Address
Address	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
City SANFORD	State FL	Zip Code [redacted]	Evening Telephone Number

Do you authorize NHTSA to provide a copy of this report to the manufacturer of your vehicle? ☐ YES ☒ NO
In the absence of an authorization, NHTSA WILL NOT provide your name or address to the vehicle manufacturer.
Signature of Owner _____ Date __/__/__

VEHICLE INFORMATION

17 digit Vehicle Identification Number Located at bottom of windshield on driver's side	Make	Model	Model Year
4UZAAHBV21CJ04218	FLEETWOOD	BOUNDER 35E	2001

Date Purchased	Dealer's Name and Telephone Number			Engine:	Fuel Type:
JAN 01	LAZY DAYS, SEFFNER, FL			No. Cylinders 6	DIESEL
Original Owner ☒	Dealer's City	State	Zip Code		

Transmission Type		Powertrain	Vehicle Component Code
AUTO	☒ Antilock Brakes ☒ Cruise Control	CUMMINS 6.9 ALLISON MD3060	191000 TIRES: SIDEWALLS Multiple Failure: # 3

FAILED COMPONENT(S)/PART(S) INFORMATION

Incident Date(s)	Failure Mileage	Failure Speed	
04-NOV-2003	15,200 16,400 16,700	65 ASSUMED 65	1ST OCCURENCE 9-17-02 SIDEWALL BLOWOUT RF 2ND OCCURENCE 9-18-02 SIDEWALL BLOWOUT LF 3RD OCCURENCE 9-28-02 SIDEWALL BLOWOUT RRF

ADDITIONAL ITEMS TO BE COMPLETED WHEN REPORTING A TIRE FAILURE

Tire Make	Tire Model (Name or Number)	Tire Size (Example P215/65R15)
MICHELIN	XRV	255/80R22.5 1000 MILES

DOT No. (Example: DOTMALSABC035)		Failure Location:	Tire Failure Type
B6H6AK	☒ Original Equipment ☐ Prior Repair	INDIANA, WISCONSIN, OREGON	

Tire Component Code
191000 TIRES: SIDEWALLS

ADDITIONAL ITEMS TO BE COMPLETED WHEN REPORTING A CHILD SEAT FAILURE

Make:	Date Manufactured:	Model No./Name:
Seat Type:	Installation System:	
Child Seat Component Code:	Failed Part:	

APPLICABLE INCIDENT INFORMATION

(Please describe in detail the incident(s), Failure(s), Crash(es), and Injury(ies).)

Crash	Fire	Number of Persons Injured	Number of Deaths	Reported to Police
☐ Yes ☒ No	☐ Yes ☒ No	0	0	N

Narrative Description of Incident(S), Crash(es), and Injury(ies).
Please describe (1) events leading up to the failure, (2) failure and its consequences, and (3) what was done to correct the failure; i.e. parts repaired or replaced (and if old part is available).

[redacted] ON RIGHT SIDE WHEEL WHILE DRIVING [redacted] MPH. CONSUMER WAS ABLE TO PULL OVER TO THE SHOULDER, CALLED ROAD SIDE FOR ASSISTANCE TO REPAIR THE TIRE. [redacted] DOT B6H6AK, "AK MICHELIN 255/80R 22.5 XRV

SEE ATTACHED NARRATIVE FOR THE WHOLE STORY - YOU CAN SEE MANY MORE STORIES LIKE MINE ON THE INTERNET BY SEARCHING "MICHELIN XRV TIRE FAILURES"

Include, if available: Police/Fire Department Report, Photos, and Repair Invoice. ATTACH ADDITIONAL SHEETS IF NECESSARY

Narrative Description of Incident(s), Failure(s), Crash(es), and Injury(ies)

SO FAR I HAVEN'T KNOWN OF ANYONE INJURED OR KILLED BY THESE TIRE FAILURES, BUT I'm CONVINCED IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME - IN VIEW OF THE FACT THAT TWO OF MY FAILURES OCCURED STANDING STILL, WHAT HAPPENS IF ONE OF THESE BLOWS WHILE I'm PUTTING AIR IN IT -

PLEASE FIND OUT WHAT'S GOING ON WITH THESE TIRES!

ATTACH ADDITIONAL SHEETS IF NECESSARY

U.S. Department of Transportation

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

400 Seventh St., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590

Official Business
Penalty for Private Use $300

BUSINESS REPLY MAIL
FIRST CLASS PERMIT NO 73173 WASHINGTON, D.C.

POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY NATL. HWY. TRAFFIC SAFETY ADMIN.

U.S. Department of Transportation
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
Office of Defects Investigation, NVS-216
400 7th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20590

US Department of Transportation
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/safecar

1-888-DASH-2-DOT
1-888-327-4236
DOT Auto Safety Hotline
(DASH) 2 DOT

DASH2DOT
and dial toll free at

TO REPORT VEHICLE SAFETY DEFECTS
COMPLETE THIS FORM
OR

DOT AUTO SAFETY HOTLINE

VEHICLE OWNER'S QUESTIONNAIRE

In January of 2002 I purchased a new Bounder Diesel, Model 39Z, which came equipped with Michelin XRV tires in size 255/80R22.5 Load Range G. All of the tires on my unit were manufactured in the 19th week of 2000, as marked on the tires sidewalls.
Shortly after purchase I weighed the coach with all cargo on board as normally used and with all fluids filled and normal passenger occupancy onboard. Weights were as follows:

Front axle-8440 lbs.
Rear axle-15,640 lbs.
Gross weight of vehicle-24,000 lbs

As shown on the Federal Vehicle label posted in the vehicle my weight ratings are:

Front axle-9,500 lbs.
Rear axle-17,000 lbs.
Gross weight rating 26,500 lbs.

Using this information I believed I was well within the limits to operate this vehicle safely.
Per the Michelin tire inflation chart that came with my vehicle owners package, and using the previously given axle weights, I determined my tire inflation pressures using the following logic:
If the axle weights were evenly divided on the ends of the axles, correct pressures would be as follows:

Front tire PSI-85 lbs.
Rear tire PSI-90 lbs.

Assuming an unbalance of 10% side to side due to building/loading variations, The weight on the heavy end of the axles would be as follows:

Front axle-4630 lbs. = 95 PSI
Rear axle-8,600 lbs. = 95 PSI

Since most tire dealerships recommend inflating truck tires to the PSI for the weight on that tire plus 10 PSI to allow for some normal pressure losses without falling below minimum pressure for the tire load, I added in the 10 PSI knowing I would still not be in violation of the maximum inflation pressure as listed on the tire sidewall. This pressure should have given me the maximum load carrying capacity of these tires in both the single and dual configuration.

Tire pressures on my tires are checked prior to driving the vehicle and are then checked prior to every driving day during trips.
My first tire failure was the passenger side front while driving through Indiana on 7-17-03. Failure occurred at @62MPH, the sidewall blew out with explosive force, vehicle control was good and vehicle was put on the side of the road with no additional damage. At the time of this occurrence the tire had 15,200 miles on it, tread wear was even, no gouges or abrasions and the casing was checked after removal from the rim to determine if a puncture had occurred. No cause for the failure could be determined. The new replacement tire was also an XRV model, but when checked for inflation it was noted that the sidewall information called for 110 PSI maximum versus the 105 PSI shown on the original tires, even though the maximum weight shown was still the same—5205 lbs.

This was the first tire to fail and thought to be an isolated incident. The bill was paid and the roadside service technician took the blown casing with him, as I have nowhere to carry a blown out tire while traveling in the coach.

Per the manufacturers recommendation I kept both front tires inflated to 105 PSI even though the new tire called for 110 PSI, this is necessary to maintain proper steering and braking characteristics.

The second tire failure occurred at 16,400 miles on 9-13-03, again, tire inflation was checked on all tires prior to driving the vehicle. After driving 11 miles one way to a dump station, one mile short of being back at my parking location the driver's side front tire blew out catastrophically at a speed of less than 5 MPH. The blowout and subsequent tire damage on this tire was virtually identical to the first one.

Since I now had the feeling something wasn't right about the tires on this coach, I opted to replace this tire with a Michelin model XZE, per the tire dealer, this tire is a nearly identical tire to the XRV in all dimensions, but the side walls are somewhat heavier as it is a truck designated tire and made from a different rubber compound.

Michelin customer service was contacted at this time with my concerns about the safety of these tires. Their position is that the XRV is a good tire and my failures are due either to overloading or running under inflated. Michelin did agree to reimburse me for the second failure with the understanding that it was being done as a "good will" gesture and was not a warranty issue.

The third tire failure was at 18,800 miles on 9-28-03, again it was a catastrophic sidewall blowout of the inner passenger dual and occurred at a dead stop after only 75 miles of driving since the tire pressures had been checked prior to commencing the days travel. Again I opted to replace with an XZE model, but had it put on the front axle where the new XRV had been, this was done to give me the two supposedly heavier tires on the steer axle and also to keep all tires on the drive axle as matched as possible.

Again, Michelin customer service was contacted and they still insisted I was overloading or under inflating even though they agreed that my weights and pressures were good. At this time I had axle weights only, and Michelin felt I could be overloaded on individual tire positions (this baffled me as my axle weight on the front was within specs but I had blown both front tires so far). Without individual wheel weights, I really couldn't mount a good argument, so I voiced my displeasure and left it at that.

While on this trip, I had an opportunity, finally, to get my coach weighed for individual tire weights as follows:

Left front—4800 lbs.
Right front—4150lbs.
Left rear—7250 lbs.
Right rear—8650 lbs.

All of these weights are within the load carrying limits of the Michelin XRV tires per Michelins inflation charts when tires are inflated to 105 PSI.

Michelin agreed that the weights are good but that the coach is somewhat heavy on the diagonal corners and there really isn't enough "safety margin" on the heavy corners. No one could give me a figure for this "safety margin" in either pounds or percentage of load capacity.

To date nothing has been resolved. Michelins newest inflation tables show the XRV tire in 255/80R22.5 Load Range G as having a maximum inflation pressure of 115 PSI (single) for a maximum load capacity of 5205 lbs (this is the same weight mine were said to carry at 105 PSI). When Michelin customer service was asked about this, I was told it was OK to inflate all of my XRV tires to 115 PSI even though the sidewalls specified 105PSI maximum. I don't buy that as I have always understood that a tire can be inflated an additional 10 PSI over its proper load carrying inflation for safety but not to exceed either the tire max inflation or the wheel max pressure. With this in mind I'm keeping my XRV tires at 105 PSI as I believe the higher pressure is just asking to get injured.
So far I have gleaned the following information from this whole sequence of events:

Freightliner Corporation builds the XC chassis and sells it to Fleetwood with the load specs and the Michelin XRV tires installed. In theory the tires are capable of handling the axle rated weights.
Fleetwood builds the coach and markets it with all the capacities within specifications set by both Freightliner and Michelin.

In spite of all this, and the fact that Freightliner, Fleetwood and Michelin all agree that my wheel weights are good, I have blown three tires so far. All occurrences were catastrophic sidewall failures, none of the tires exhibited signs of abuse or puncturing nor were they subject to any impacts beyond normal highway travel.
My conclusion is that the XRV tires are not up to the task their specifications indicate, I believe they are marginal at best. I do not feel that my vehicle is safe on the highway with these tires on it.
If this supposed "safety margin" exists, it should be given a real value and taken into consideration when the decision is made to put tires on these coaches.
If my situation was unique I'd probably just accept my bad luck, pay the bill and go on down the road, but after checking the internet I find that I'm not the only victim, there are many more having problems with the XRV tires.
For what it's worth, I am filing a complaint with the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration and am spending a fair amount of my time contacting the other victims and encouraging them to file complaints also. If enough people come forward we just may be able to get someone to actually look into this problem.
It seems a little strange to me that the 1999 American Tradition was recalled for front tires that could be overloaded when the coach was used and loaded in its "intended manor". Somehow that seems like my exact situation.

This is not intended as a "get Michelin" story, I still believe they make many good tires, the 22.5 inch XRV just isn't one of them, my intention is to put XZA tires on in the place of the XRVs, as they are a load range H tire and should give me the fictitious "safety margin" that Michelin customer service told me about. Given my experience with the XRV tires, I just can't do any worse.