[redacted]

Coeur d'Alene, I[redacted]

Phone [redacted]
E-mail: [redacted]

25 12:42

July 18, 2006

National Highway Traffic
Safety Administration
400 7th Street. S.W.
Washington, DC 20590

I sent the attached letter to Dutchmen Industries in June and to Trailer Life and the Consumer Products Safety Commission. I received a letter from the CPSC indicating that I had sent it to the wrong agency. I am herewith re-sending it to you for your review and any action you deem necessary.

Sincerely,

[redacted]

Attachment:

Letter to Dutchmen Manufacturing

Received
7/28/06

[redacted]
Coeur d'Alene, ID [redacted]

Phone: [redacted]
E-mail: [redacted]

July 18, 2006

Dutchmen Manufacturing, Inc.
Warranty Department
305 Steury Ave.
Goshen, IN 46528

Dear Sir or Madam:

I have a 2004 Dutchmen Lite 24QB-SSI VIN 47CTD2M284[redacted] On a recent trip, early on the last morning (June 18th, 06) I turned on the heat in preparation to getting up. Shortly after the heat came on, my wife noticed an acrid burning smell and our smoke detector went off briefly. I got up quickly, and noted that there was no battery power. I quickly checked the normal locations, the power center, heater, and stove and even lifted the bed base, but found no more smoke. There was still no power, and I assumed the batteries were flat.

Upon returning home, I noted that every thing worked when plugged into shore power, but when it was disconnected, there was no power. I had a friend who is a retired electrical engineer come over and we did some diagnosing. After determining that the batteries were charged, we checked the power center and determined that no power was getting to the distribution panel from the batteries. Logic told us that there was an open circuit in the main power feed from the batteries. After a short time lying under the trailer, we found a small hole burned in the bottom plastic weather cover, just forward of the right front wheel.

Upon cutting open the plastic, I found the main loom that runs under the trailer burned and fused together. I am including pictures attached to document this. Thanks to a generous local RV repair shop, I was given 18" lengths of the six wires that were burned out and have replaced them. The only cost I incurred was for some Silicone sealant and wire nuts to compete the connections, totaling $6.72, plus three hours of my time to diagnose and repair the problem, (Shop cost at the same RV facility is $82.50 per hour).

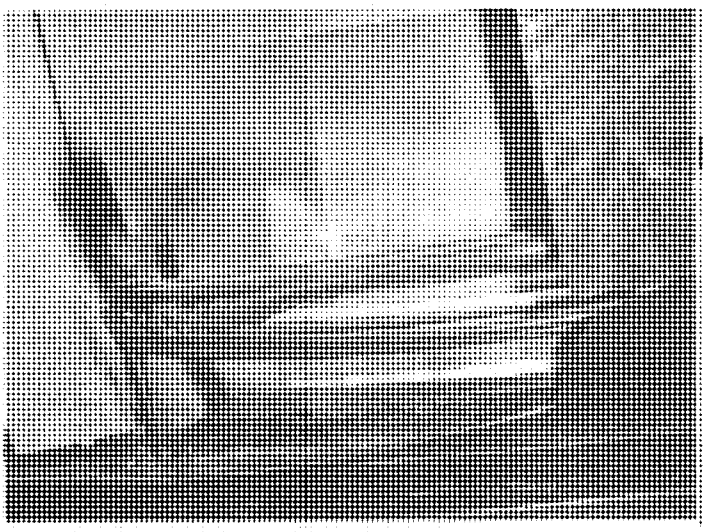
As you can see from the photos, this was an example of very poor workman ship. The installer of the heater and or the electrical loom created a problem by placing the plenum right over the wires. The space is too tight and the sharp edge of the plenum eventually penetrated the insulation causing a potentially tragic short. Note in the picture of the wires after they were cut out that the main power cable got hot enough to melt the copper wire into a nice round ball. While the pictures show the plenum is pushed out of the way, I did that prior to taking the pictures in order to completely expose the wires. If this is the way all of these models have been wired, you have some potentially disastrous situations waiting to happen. I hope you will look into this situation and take appropriate steps to inspect and repair existing installations.

Sincerely,

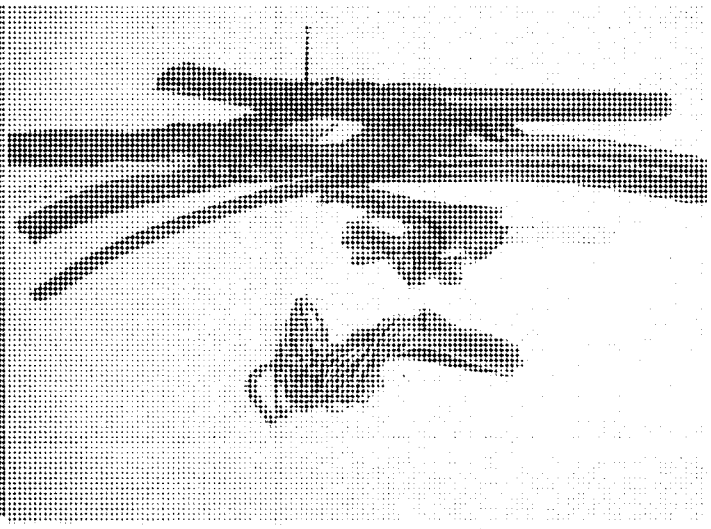
[redacted]

CC:

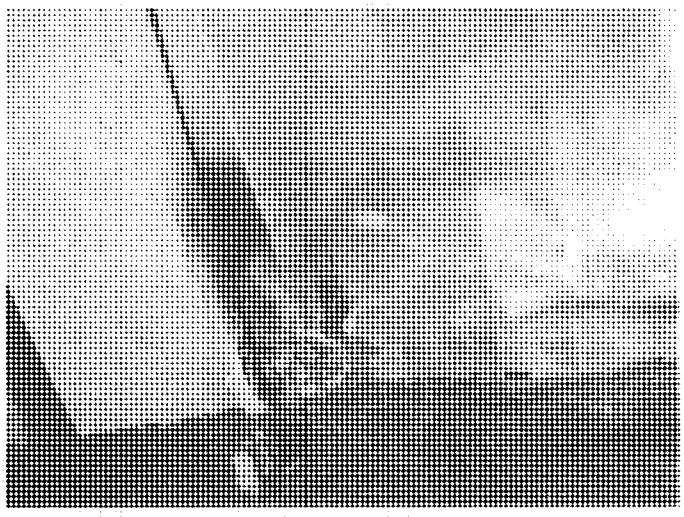
Consumer Products Safety Commission
Trailer Life, RV Clinic



Initial exposure of burnt wiring. Plenum has been pushed upwards by me to break wires free.



Wires after removal. Note the melted copper ball at the end of the main red wire at arrow.



Plenum and hole for wires after wires are removed. Notice the charred wood and arc damage to the aluminum plenum.