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) 2007 OCT -3 AM 8:21
INTERNET:www.nhtsa.dot.gov/hotline

FOR AGENCY USE ONLY 100148

Date Received	Repository
13-SEP-2007	☐
	Reference No. 10202950

OWNER INFORMATION (Type or Print)

Name	Daytime Telephone Number	E-mail Address
[redacted]	[redacted]	
Address [redacted]	Evening Telephone Number	
City BAKERSFIELD **State** CA **Zip Code** [redacted]		

Do you authorize NHTSA to provide a copy of this report to the manufacturer of your vehicle? ☒ YES ☐ NO
In the absence of an [illegible] NHTSA WILL NOT provide your name or address to the vehicle manufacturer.
Signature of Owner [redacted] Date 9/21/07

VEHICLE INFORMATION

17 digit Vehicle Identification Number Located at bottom of windshield on driver's side	Make	Model	Model Year
4UZAAHAK22[redacted]	WINNEBAGO	JOURNEY DL	2002

Date Purchased	Dealer's Name and Telephone Number			Engine:	Fuel Type:
01-JAN-03	Venture out R.V.			No: Cylinders 6	Diesel
Original Owner ☒	Dealer's City Bakersfield	State CA	Zip Code 93307		

Transmission Type		Powertrain	Vehicle Component Code
AUTOMATIC	☐ Antilock Brakes ☒ Cruise Control	~~4 WHEEL DRIVE~~ 2 W Drive 1-Axel-4 Tires	080000 FUEL SYSTEM, DIESEL Specialized Hydraulic System
			Multiple Failure: 1

FAILED COMPONENT(S)/PART(S) INFORMATION

Incident Date(s)	Failure Mileage	Failure Speed
13-SEP-2007	50000	0

ADDITIONAL ITEMS TO BE COMPLETED WHEN REPORTING A TIRE FAILURE

Tire Make	Tire Model (Name or Number)	Tire Size (Example P215/65R15)
DOT No. (Example: DOTMAL9ABC036)	☐ Original Equipment ☐ Prior Repair	Failure Location:
Tire Component Code		Tire Failure Type no Failure

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).

TL*THE CONTACT OWNS A 2002 WINNEBAGO JOURNEY DL. WHILE DRIVING LESS THAN 40 MPH, THE CONTACT NOTICED THAT THE REAR BEDROOM SLIDE WAS PROTRUDING APPROXIMATELY 3 INCHES. HE PULLED OVER AND EXITED THE VEHICLE IN AN ATTEMPT TO RETRACT THE SLIDE AND NOTICED SMOKE RISING FROM THE ENGINE COMPARTMENT. MINUTES LATER, HE HEARD AN EXPLOSION NEAR THE REAR OF THE VEHICLE AND REALIZED THAT THE ENGINE CAUGHT FIRE. THE FIRE DEPARTMENT EXTINGUISHED THE FIRE WITHIN ONE MINUTE. THE VEHICLE WAS TOWED TO A REPAIR SHOP. THE MANUFACTURER STATED THAT SINCE THE VEHICLE WAS OUT OF WARRANTY, THEY WERE NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE FAILURE. THE CONTACT BELIEVED THAT THE FIRE WAS CAUSED BY THE HYDRAULIC LINES RUNNING ACROSS THE EXHAUST SYSTEM. THE HYDRAULIC LINE BEGAN TO LEAK ONTO THE EXHAUST SYSTEM AND CAUSED THE ENGINE FIRE. THE CURRENT AND FAILURE MILEAGES WERE 50,000.

See Attached. This part contain misunderstanding.

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)

See ATTACHED 4 PAGES-
PHOTOS AND INVESTIGATION REPORTS AVAILABLE LATER.

ATTACH ADDITIONAL SHEETS IF NECESSARY

U.S. Department
of Transportation

**National Highway
Traffic Safety
Administration**

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

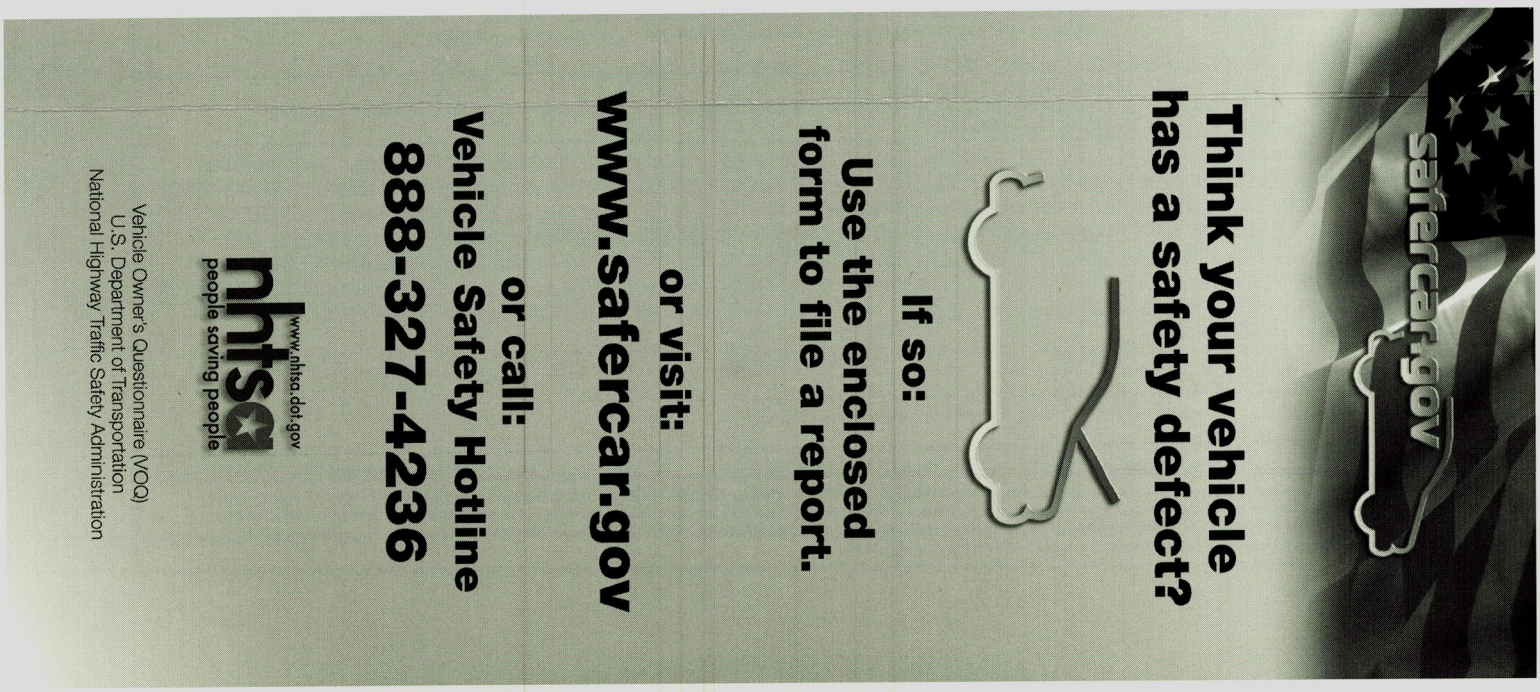
Official Business
Penalty for Private Use $300

**NO POSTAGE
NECESSARY
IF MAILED
IN THE
UNITED STATES**

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-210
400 7th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20590



Fire Hazard GMAC Claim # [redacted]

Winnebago Journey D L, CA License # [redacted] Chassis VIN: #4UZAAHAK22C[redacted] Model # 2002 WKP36GD, Serial # 10P86C[redacted] with under 50,000.00 miles, original owner.

September 12, 2007 was a clear sunny day; the temperature was heading upwards of 75 degrees by 12 noon.

Climbing the 21 mile grade going East on Highway 58 to Tehachapi, CA was no problem for this 330 Cat diesel, it had done it many times before, even the 7% inclines never raised the engine temperature above the half way mark. This time something else happened.

About one mile after turning on to Highway 202, a relatively flat country road, heading south, at less than 40 miles per hour I noticed that the left rear bedroom slide was out about 3 to 4 inches. This was unusual because it had never creped out more than 3/4 to one inch and not at all since a solenoid was replace about 2 or 3 years ago.

Within 3/4 to one mile I found a safe place to pull of to the right of the road near Lonely Lane. The turbo charger had been working pretty hard coming up the hill so after setting the park brake I let the engine idle while I went to the rear of the coach to retract the slide, fortunately my wife remained in front.

The bedroom has no window on the left so I saw nothing unusual when I pushed the retract switch except the slide did not move. My wife instantly hollered that smoke was coming out from the rear left side. I ran to the front, turned off the engine, grabbed the fire extinguisher and we both exited in a hurry. By the time I got to the rear of the coach grey smoke was coming out the back pretty heavy. A truck driver had already stopped across the road from me. He looked at my little two pound extinguisher, half laughed and said; "that ain't gonna do it". He ran back to his truck and came back with a large, 30 or 50 pound extinguisher.

Meanwhile things are happening fast. A loud Pop came from the engine compartment followed by the sound of a lot of air being released. The fire accelerated quickly and turned black with some yellowish brown swirls. Another loud pop came from the engine compartment followed by a couple of quarts of a brownish clear, oily liquid dumped on the ground under the engine compartment. Another loud woosh was herd, the smoke got lighter in color and started to decrees. The large extinguisher had done its job and completely extinguished the fire.

The total time involved from the time I pushed the retract switch to the final blast of the fire extinguisher was no more than 2 or 3 minutes. By the time the fire department arrived about 10 or 15 minutes later all that was left to do was go inside and clear the smoke with exhaust fans and let the engine cool so we could open the compartment to inspect the damage.

Three old time friends joined me while we were waiting for this thing to cool down. Two of them are retired Auto mechanics instructors form L A Trade Tech; one of them had been a vehicle fire inspector for 4 or 5 years. Their knowledge has been very helpful over the years.

When the engine compartment finally cooled enough to safely open it, the bed was raised and the two engine covers were removed. The cause and progression of the fire was readily identifiable. The devastation was shocking; this thing was going nowhere but to a repair shop for some major high dollar replacements.

Put in a simple shortcut way, the bedroom slide is operated by a two-way hydraulic cylinder that is powered by an electric hydraulic pump. When the pump is not in operation the static pressure in the line, blocked by valves prevents the cylinder from opening or closing thus keeping the room in the open or closed position. This system built and designed by HWH Corp. works quit well. In order to make installation easier for many different coach lengths and styles high pressure plastic-nylon lines are used.

In this case the manufacturer, careless in their design and overzealous to save a buck created a disaster that had to happen. In this coach and many others like it the hydraulic lines are too close to the exhaust system and no protection is provided against high-pressure hydraulic oil intrusion into the engine compartment area. To make matters much worse, the sound proofing material that surrounds the engine compartment area is highly combustible. Above all the manufacturer is aware of problems in these units from hydraulic oil leaking in the engine compartment area.

The sequence of events went like this. The plastic-nylon high-pressure line for the slide got hot and weakened, the static line pressure separated or ruptured the line and the slide crept out 3 to 4 inches. The retract switch caused the pump to pump oil to close the slide, high pressure hydraulic oil squirted out the rupture or opening onto the turbo charger and hot exhaust. The oil ignited then the soundproofing on the side of the engine box. This was enough heat to soften the airline. The one hundred plus pounds of air pressure ruptured the softened line. The blowtorch effect was created, the rest of the soundproofing burnt. The high heat caused the AC high-pressure line to blow and spill compressor oil all over the engine compartment and the ground. The extinguisher did its job before the AC oil ignited.

The fire duration was only 2 or 3 minutes but the heat was intense enough to destroy all the wiring-harnesses and control – modules in the engine area. It is not possible to determine the extent of other component damage until the tear down and rebuilding is complete enough for further testing
Fortunately no body was hurt and I am not aware of any other property damage at this time.

Unfortunately the manufacturers have allowed many other coaches with the same defects out of their factory and sold to the public. It is not a question of will this dangerous fire situation be repeated but WHEN and will the results be deadly. Will the next person be lucky like I was to find a wide clear paved area with no combustibles and have a Good Samaritan at his side with a giant fire extinguisher? Even if that lucky situation was likely to be repeated a recall should be initiated immediately to correct this very hazardous situation.

The likelihood of this fire incident will more likely be repeated in a rural, Isolated area with no help available beside the little two- pond extinguisher that comes with the vehicle. The fire Department may not get there for 15 to 30 minutes. By that time the 80 to 90 gallons of diesel and the 20 plus gallons of propane will have ignited. This will be a giant fireball. How many lives must be lost? Which forest will cost another [redacted]o extinguish?

For these reasons a recall must be initiated immediately and quickly fix this hazardous situation.

The fix is relatively simple:

4. Move all hydraulic or combustible lines well away from high heat sources, such as turbo chargers and exhaust pipes.

5. All engine sound or heat proofing should be of some fire-retardant or fireproof material, especially near hot items such as Turbo Chargers.

6. A shield should be provided so accidental hydraulic oil discharge cannot hit hot items hike turbo chargers and hot exhausts.

With the increase of motor homes with slides on the highway, the danger is increasing. A fix is necessary.

MJM investigations is to look at the RV in the near future I will try to make their report made available to you then.

I was doing some research trying to find another fire with similarities to this one, it was quick and easy August 22, 2007, [redacted] of The Star Tribune had a news article posted on the internet about a fire on INTERSTATE 90 near Lewiston, Minn. The story and graphic photo of a burning RV seemed very close to mine with drastic results. Fire Chief [redacted] of the Lewiston fire Dept. Reported this to be an engine fire on a 36ft. motor home owned by a family from Florida. I have not yet verified the following information but I believe it may likely turn out to be A 36 ft. Alfa built on a Freightliner chassis with a rear left hand slide powered by HWH hydraulic cylinder with hoses right near the turbo and exhaust of a CAT engine.
If it was,there may not be enough left to determine the cause of the fire but chances are the slide had come out a little and the cause of the fire was the same as mine.
See http:/[redacted]

In Winona County, a motor home is no more

Photo by Renee Jones Schneider , Star Tribune

In Winona County, a motor home is no more

By [redacted], Star Tribune
Last update: August 22, 2007 – 9:37 PM
A fire that engulfed a recreational vehicle on Wednesday temporarily shut down eastbound Interstate 90 near Lewiston, Minn., leaving a Florida family of seven stranded.
The family, using their RV to pull a fair concession stand, left the Steele County Fair in Owatonna and were enroute to a county fair in Illinois, when a fire started in the engine compartment of their 36-foot motor home, said Lewiston Fire Chief [redacted]
Flames shot through the rear bedroom area and then engulfed the vehicle, which was destroyed.
The Red Cross put the family up in a nearby hotel, [redacted] said.