

CL-10208317-8360

October 22, 2007

NHTSA
U.S. Department of Transportation
Washington, DC 20590

2007 NOV -1 AM 11:25

Subject: Report of Observed Safety Design Issue

Gentlemen/Ladies:

In accordance with information provided in the R-Vision Owner's Manual for Towable Units, I am forwarding this notice of safety design deficiency observations regarding the 2007 Trail-Lite Model 83088 manufactured by R-Vision Inc., Warsaw, IN.

Attached is a copy of correspondence, which I supplied to R-Vision and my local dealer as noted. I received a callback from Ms. Angie Stein, R-Vision Product Warranty Manager, who indicated that they had received my letter and were taking it seriously. I was told that I would be hearing from her and/or their product design manager regarding my concern and means to alleviate it. This was essentially two months ago. In spite of repeated messages left by me on Ms. Stein's answering machine, and confirmation by the plant operator that Ms. Stein was present, I have never received any further communication from the factory.

This leads me to conclude that they are fully aware of a safety problem, that they are not willing to discuss it, and that they do not have a fix readily available. It would seem they would be aware of the product liability that goes with this attitude, and would responsibly take action to correct this problem with this, and any other trailer similarly deficient. Waiting until someone is killed or seriously injured by accidents induced by excessive trailer sway is irresponsible.

I have since had conversations with several professional members of the RV Industry community and have been told that there is an awareness of this deficiency for Trail-Lite trailers in the industry at large. Several dealers indicated that they have had to modify the forward trailer frame to add sufficient weight [steel bar or lead] to make the trailer safe to tow.

I am concerned that there should be adequate requirements for towing stability testing and standards for anti-sway performance, which should be levied upon all manufacturers of these products.

I do not have the facility to conduct my own tests with the trailer I have been unfortunate enough to have purchased. The manufacturer is unresponsive to any attempt to discuss this further, and I believe that there is sufficient cause for concern to warrant investigation by the NHTSA. Could you please let me know if others have had similar experiences?

Sincerely,

Certificate St [redacted] Calif.

E-mail: [redacted]

Attachment: Copy of Letter dated August 27, 2007
CC: R-Vision, Inc.
2666 S Country Club Rd
Warsaw, IN, 46580-7408

Dee's RV
2330 Naegle Rd
Colorado Springs, CO 80904

NM
11/10/07
KS

COPY

Monday, August 27, 2007

R-Vision, Inc.
2666 S Centry Club Rd
Warsaw, IN, 46580-7408

Attn: Product Development Manager

Dear Sir/Madam:

I am writing this letter because your web-site precludes an e-mail with a question or comment [instead, it directs me to a dealer, and my need is to communicate a serious concern to you].

Last March, I purchased a new 2007 Trail-Lite 8308S after considerable research and conversations with several dealers and users. My dealer [Dee's RV, Colorado Springs, CO] assured me that the trailer was appropriate for my needs. My tow vehicle is a 1998 Tahoe with a full factory tow package and Tekonsha brake controller.

Here is the problem: the trailer is not stable when towed and I was not made aware of any requirement to compensate for a defective design tongue weight as the trailer is delivered. [Your brochure notes the Axle Dry Wt to be 4738 lbs and the Hitch Dry Wt to be 424 lbs. This comes to a total dry weight of 5162 lbs. 424 lbs is about 8.2% of the total weight]

My only experience in trailering was three years happily pulling a Hi-Lo 21' trailer with never a problem. I now know that the hitch weight is recommended to be 12-13% minimum of the total towed weight, per most sites I have contacted on the web.

When we first took delivery of the trailer, I was using a simple weight transfer hitch from my Hi-Lo usage. The Trail-Lite developed serious instability while descending a very gradual grade on I-25 south of Colorado Springs. I estimate the rear swayed a distance to 3-4' side to side. We recovered by gradually slowing while applying the trailer brakes only. I discussed this with my dealer and subsequently installed a Reese Dual-Cam anti-sway hitch. We proceeded to travel from Colorado to Washington state and were dismayed to come very close to a full crash due to the instability of the trailer on I-5 south of Seattle at about 55 mph and with a gentle down-grade. The trailer swung far enough to lift wheels off the ground and was barely recovered. Other traffic braked off and cleared away behind us, expecting a full crash.

We spent 4 days limping home at no more than 55 mph at any time, and much less on down-grades due to the trailers behavior. We also moved most of our personal objects [clothing, chairs, blankets, cameras, computer, etc.], toward the front of the trailer in an attempt to see if that helped. I could not tell that it improved the situation.

Since this trailer is not safe for reasonable use [which I mean to include reasonable distribution of personal effects into the provided cabinets and compartments], I request that you refund our purchase price and take the trailer back. We can no longer accept the risk posed by this trailer and its design inadequacy for its intended purpose.

Sincerely,

Certificate SF [redacted] Calif.

E-mail: [redacted]

Manitou Springs, CO [redacted]

Cc: Dee's RV
2330 Naegle Rd
Colorado Springs, CO 80904