

CL-10232856-4275

NVS-200

To: The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
U.S. Department of Transportation
Washington D.C. 20590

2008 JUN 25 PM 1:07

2008 JUN 24 P 11:11

From: [Redacted]
Ingram, TX [Redacted]
[Redacted] or [Redacted]

TRAVEL

CC: Family Motor Coach Association
8291 Clough Pike
Cincinnati, Ohio 45244-2796
Membership # F328418

CC: Winnebago Industries, Inc.
P.O. Box 152
Forest City, Iowa 50436

Date: June 17, 2008

Re: Trailer Towing Receiver Came Off of Motorhome While Pulling Tow Car.

To Whom It May Concern:

I own a 2003 Winnebago Adventurer Model WFG33V motorhome with 45045 miles. I pull a tow car which was totally outfitted and connected to the motorhome by Camping World in Tucson, Arizona.

I was on a trip to the Washington D.C. area in April this year. Going between Jackson and Nashville, Tennessee on April 24, about 1:00 pm. At the last minute, decided to stay overnight at Loretta Lynn's Ranch. As I was turning into the entrance there was a horrible screeching noise. After completely pulling off the highway, I stopped to discover the tow-bar receiver had become unbolted on the left side, which twisted and bent backward and down because the right side was still tightly bolted. Also, one arm of the tow bar was bent. The people at the gatehouse, 931-296-7700, will verify this. At the time of this accident I was going only about 5 miles per hour. If I had decided not to stop at Loretta Lynn's Ranch and continue to drive 60-65 miles per hour down I-40 I may not be alive today to write you this letter! I suspect that there would have been a horrible accident on I-40 probably involving more vehicles than just my own. I unbolted the right side of the receiver after disconnecting the tow-bar and put them in my tow-car and my wife had to drive the tow-car for the rest of the trip.

Finally, today, June 17, I took the receiver to a welding shop and showed it to the owner. In talking, I suggested twice that there was foul play since all three bolts on the left side were missing and all three bolts on the right side were in tact and tight, although two of them were easily loosened. That somebody loosened and possibly removed the middle of three bolts on the left side. The middle hole was unmarred which indicates that the bolt was never there. The owner of the welding shop insisted that the bolts on the left side were never tightened. If that's the case it had to be done at the factory. The owner is going to straighten it and weld reinforcing plates on both sides. To do this, he needed the distance between the

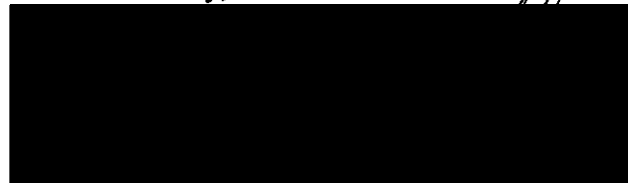
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holes on the left and on the right. I went to my motorhome and measured. That's another story.

To give my background, because I am not unknowledgeable, I designed most of the main rotor blades that are in production today at Sikorsky Aircraft. In research and development, I designed, built and flew dynamic model rotors in wind tunnels. Let me tell you that, of the three holes on each side of the chassis, two holes are 3/4 diameter and one is 11/16 diameter. The bolts are 1/2 diameter. The application is purely shear. This is an absolute no-no in good design because in a good shear design all holes need to be slightly larger than the bolt. Since there is so much slop, bolt to hole, and uneven at that, The bolts only clamp the two parts. And if friction alone cannot take the shear load, the receiver will slip until the bolts are loaded in shear. However, since the holes in the chassis are of different diameters not all bolts will be loaded uniformly in shear. I would say that you can on only count one bolt each side to carry the shear load. And if those bolts fail then the others will load up.

Disregarding my education and experience and only using common sense, I would say the whole attachment of the towing receiver on my Winnebago motorhome was badly designed. What's even worse, it creates a very critical safety issue.

Sincerely,

A large black rectangular redaction box covers the signature area. To the right of the box, there is a handwritten mark that appears to be the number '10'.