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July 21, 2008

US Dept. of Transportation
National Hwy. Traffic Safety Administration
Office of Defects Investigation
1200 New Jersey Ave. SE West Bldg.
Washington D.C. 20590
1-888-327-4236

CL-10240388-4369

Dear Sirs,

This letter and supporting documentation is to call your attention to a safety related defect in a motorhome fuel tank that leaks diesel fuel and may cause catastrophic fire, personal injury or death.

Manufacturer Name: Foretravel uses several company names, included are:
Foretravel Motorcoach
Foretravel Inc.
Foretravel Motorhomes Inc.
Foretravel of Texas, Inc.

Manufacturer Address:
811 NW Stallings Dr.
Nacogdoches, TX 75964
and
1221 NW Stallings Dr.
Nacogdoches, TX 75964

Phone & Website:
1-800-955-6226
www.foretravel.com

My Affected Motorhome
Model year: 2000
Model:U320
Serial Number: withheld at this time
Build Number: withheld at this time

Production Years & Models affected:
Years 1999 to present. The year 1999 was believed to be the first year that Foretravel used a "decorative fiberglass tank cover" to cover the aluminum fuel tank. It is the six screws that attach the 4.5" x 8" fiberglass filler neck cover to the decorative fiberglass tank cover that is the subject of this defect.
All models in these years are included. They include, but are not limited to: U270, U290, U320, GV320, Nimbus and Phenix.

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Number of units affected:
1355 estimated

Basic Defect Description:
Sheet metal screws securing small fiberglass cover to large fiberglass fuel tank cover are excessively long. These long steel screws wear against and penetrate through the aluminum fuel tank, allowing fuel to escape onto sub-floor and surrounding area, causing the potential for catastrophic fire, personal injury or death.

Detailed Defect Description:
Fuel tank in question is located in a baggage compartment just below the main floor of the motorhome. The tank rests on top of the sub-floor. Sub-floor is located approx. one foot above ground level and the bottom of said sub-floor is exposed to the exterior. There are multiple baggage compartments in these motorhomes and the fuel tank rests typically in the most forward compartment (against the forward bulkhead). The fuel tank is further identified as being below and slightly rearward of the driver and passenger seats in the living compartment. See Picture #1.

Fuel tank is accessible for fueling from both the left side and right side of the motorhome. On this motorhome it is the right side in question. This baggage compartment is known as Passenger Forward Compartment, also known as Passenger 1 Compartment (Compartment Right-1 if counting from front to back). Located in this Compartment is the Diesel Fuel Tank. See Picture #1.

This Diesel Fuel Tank is covered with a "decorative fiberglass tank cover" as shown in Picture #1. (Prior to model year 1999 the decorative tank cover was not used.) There is a smaller fiberglass cover approx. 4.5" x 8" attached to the decorative tank cover. This smaller cover allows access to the fuel level sender unit (fuel gauge system). This smaller cover is secured with six small steel sheet metal screws. See Picture #2.

These small sheet metal screws are wearing through the fuel tank, causing fuel leaks. See Pictures #2, #3, #4, #5 and #6.

The company is apparently aware of the tips of these sheet metal screws rubbing against the aluminum fuel tank, because some of the screws have been cut or ground shorter than the others. It appears that normal road vibration is causing the screws to wear against the aluminum. With that in mind, time to failure is a function of miles driven.

Picture #3 shows the aluminum fuel tank with the decorative fiberglass tank cover removed. The arrows further show the location of two holes near the top of the tank.

Picture #4 shows a close-up of Picture #3 above. The arrows further show the location of two holes near the top of the tank.

Picture #5 shows a close-up of the hole located to the left side of the filler neck. This hole penetrated the tank and allowed fuel to escape into the lower sub-floor.
Picture #6 shows a close-up of the hole located to the right side of the filler neck. This hole did not penetrate the tank, but is estimated to have a depth of approx. 75% of the tank wall thickness.

Fuel leakage from these wear holes certainly occurred when tank was full. Leakage was not noticed initially because fuel tank can be filled from filler necks on either the right side or left side of the motorhome and I most commonly fill from the left side. On this tank, one vertical inch of tank height equals approx. 8 gallons of diesel fuel. It is estimated that if the tank were filled fully, that approx. 4 gallons of diesel fuel would leak out quickly. Even as the tank fuel was consumed, sloshing of the fuel and cornering to the left would allow additional fuel to leak. In my case, this was not discovered for some time. Amount of fuel leakage is unknown.

HAZARDS PRESENT:
Fuel Leak(s) at Tank – Diesel fuel is a flammable fuel that has the potential to burn at ambient temperatures and explode violently when the fuel is at elevated temperatures.
Effects of Temperature
On hot days (high ambient) temperatures in the fuel compartment and in the fuel tank can exceed 120°F. Temperature is exacerbated by an Aquahot diesel burning boiler in the adjacent compartment and a Prosine 20 amp Inverter/ 100 amp Charger in another adjacent compartment.
Sources of Ignition
Fuel that leaks to the sub-floor can spread to adjacent compartments due to inadequate sealing between compartments. These compartments include the Aquahot diesel boiler as a source of ignition and the Prosine Inverter/Charger as a source of ignition. Further, fuel that leaks to the sub-floor can travel across sub-floor approx. 40" to the exhaust pipe of the Aquahot diesel boiler. The exhaust pipe exits the sub-floor and travels to the left side of the coach under, and adjacent to, the sub-floor. When the Aquahot boiler is in operation, the exhaust gas temperature exceeds 550°F. Diesel fuel leaking in this area and dripping onto the exhaust pipe would instantly ignite or potentially explode violently.
Structural Damage to Motorhome
This motorhome is constructed of what is commonly called a semi-monocoque method of construction. The walls, floor, sub-floor and bulkheads are constructed of a welded tubular frame, with 1/16" thick fiberglass sheet (skins) bonded on both sides. The bonding between the tubular frame and the two skins of fiberglass sheet is accomplished utilizing a foamed polyurethane adhesive. This method of creating a panel is often referred to as "stressed skin construction". The fiberglass skins literally carry much of the tensile and compressive loads. However, it is imperative that these skins remain intimately bonded to the frame or substantial strength is lost.

Foretravel has previously advised that diesel fuel that leaks onto the sub-floor can percolate through screw holes in the upper fiberglass skin, leaking fuel into the core

of the sub-floor assembly, causing unbonding of the foamed polyurethane adhesive. This results in a failure of the sub-floor assembly. Foretravel advises they have replaced sub-floors for this reason in the past. Since the sub-floor is a major structural element in monocoque frame construction, carrying both compressive and tensile forces, a failure here might result in a major structural motorhome failure. This failure would most likely occur during times of high stress, such a while driving.

CATASTROPHIC FIRE, PERSONAL INJURY, DEATH

Penetration of the fuel tank, and subsequent loss of diesel fuel, present a fire hazard that would likely destroy the motorhome. Because of the materials used in construction, motorhomes that catch fire are generally destroyed in 5-10 minutes. If fuel at elevated temperatures or the fumes of fuel at elevated temperatures come in contact with the 550°F+ Aquahot exhaust system, vapors could ignite explosively. Contained in the same compartment and to the left side of the diesel fuel tank is an 11 gallon propane tank, which would also likely explode in this situation.

This vehicle defect, in a worst-case scenario, would likely cause the total destruction of the motorhome. Occupants inside would have little time to exit. If occupants were sleeping in the motorhome, they would likely be overcome by smoke inhalation due to burning polyurethane foam and other plastic materials before they were burned alive.

In addition, this vehicle defect could potentially cause structural frame failures resulting in loss of vehicle control while driving. This could potentially cause personal injury or death.

RECOMMENDED REPAIR

The ideal repair would involve draining and cleaning the fuel tank and welding over the holes in the affected area. The six screws securing the 4.5" x 8" fiberglass cover probably cannot be shortened sufficiently (and still secure the cover properly) to prevent contact with the aluminum fuel tank. Therefore, some other securing method must be found.

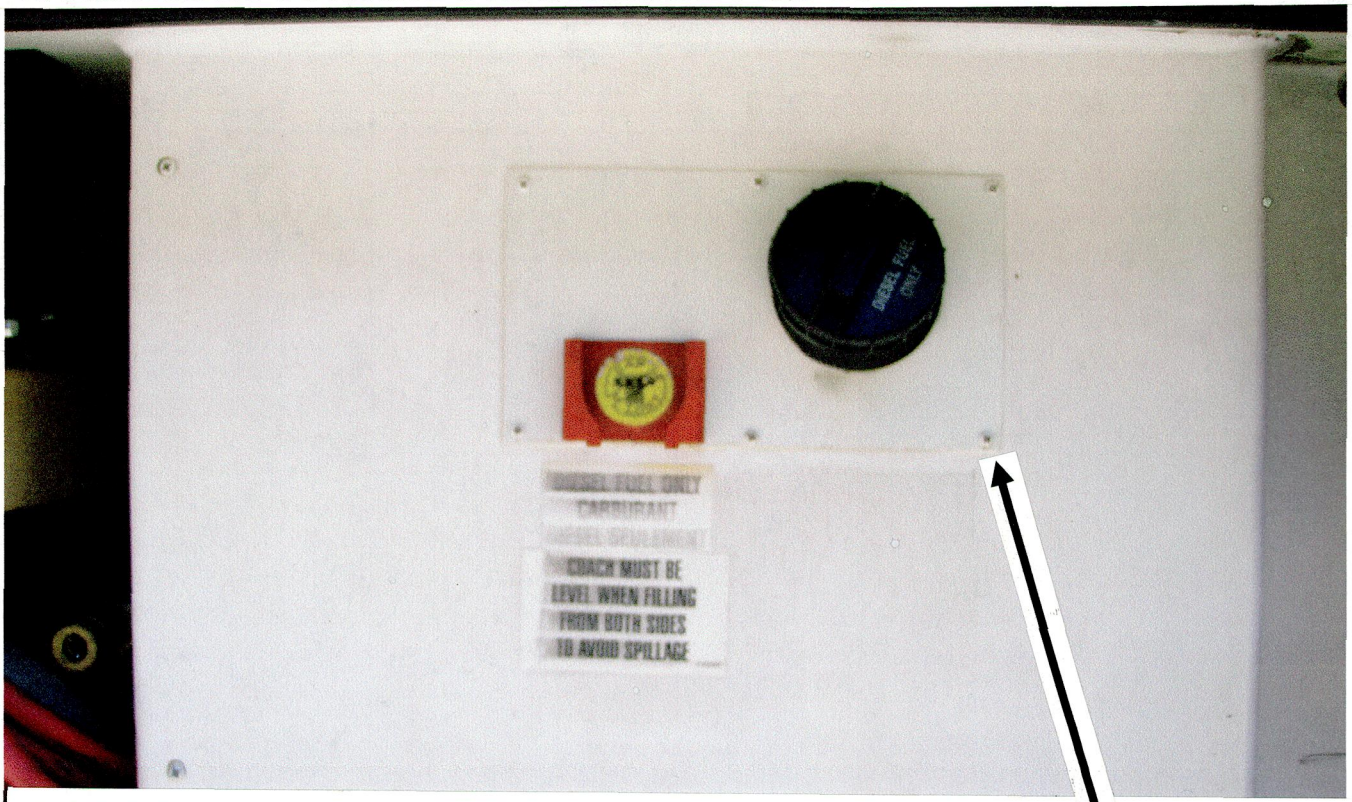
On my motorhome, I used 2-part epoxy to fill in the holes. This is probably not a long-term fix. The sheet metal screws were ground down so no portion of the screw protrudes through and up against the aluminum tank wall.

OTHER

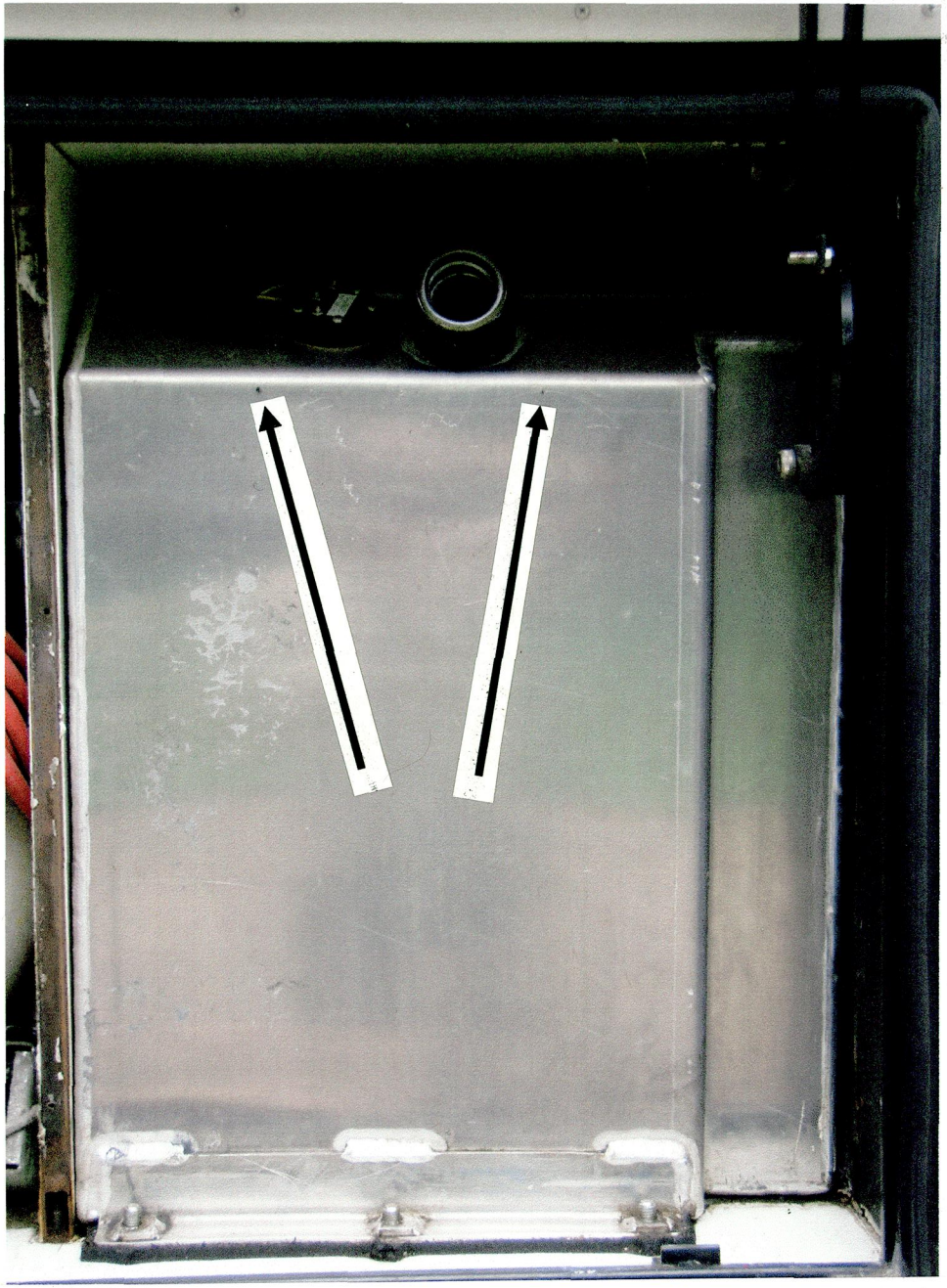
I have been advised by some other customers and former employees that Foretravel typically denies responsibility for a problem and generally tries to avoid paying warranty on major issues. Foretravel also maintains an extensive list of all known Foretravel customers and current owners through their Foretravel Motorcade Club.

enclosures: 3 pages photos

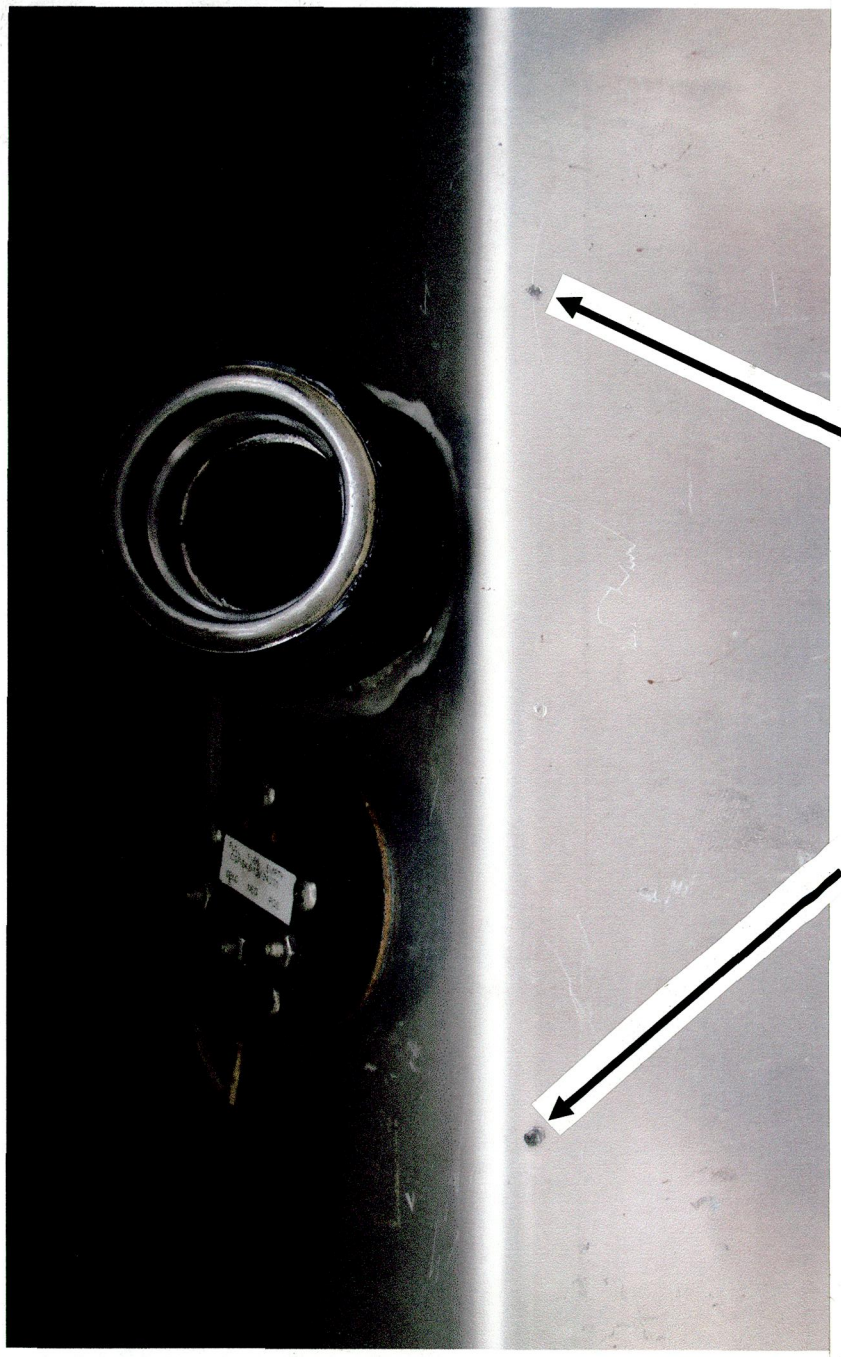
PICTURE 1
FOREWORD PASSENGER SIDE BAGGAGE COMPARTMENT
W/ FIBERGLASS COVERING OVER ALUMINUM FUEL TANK



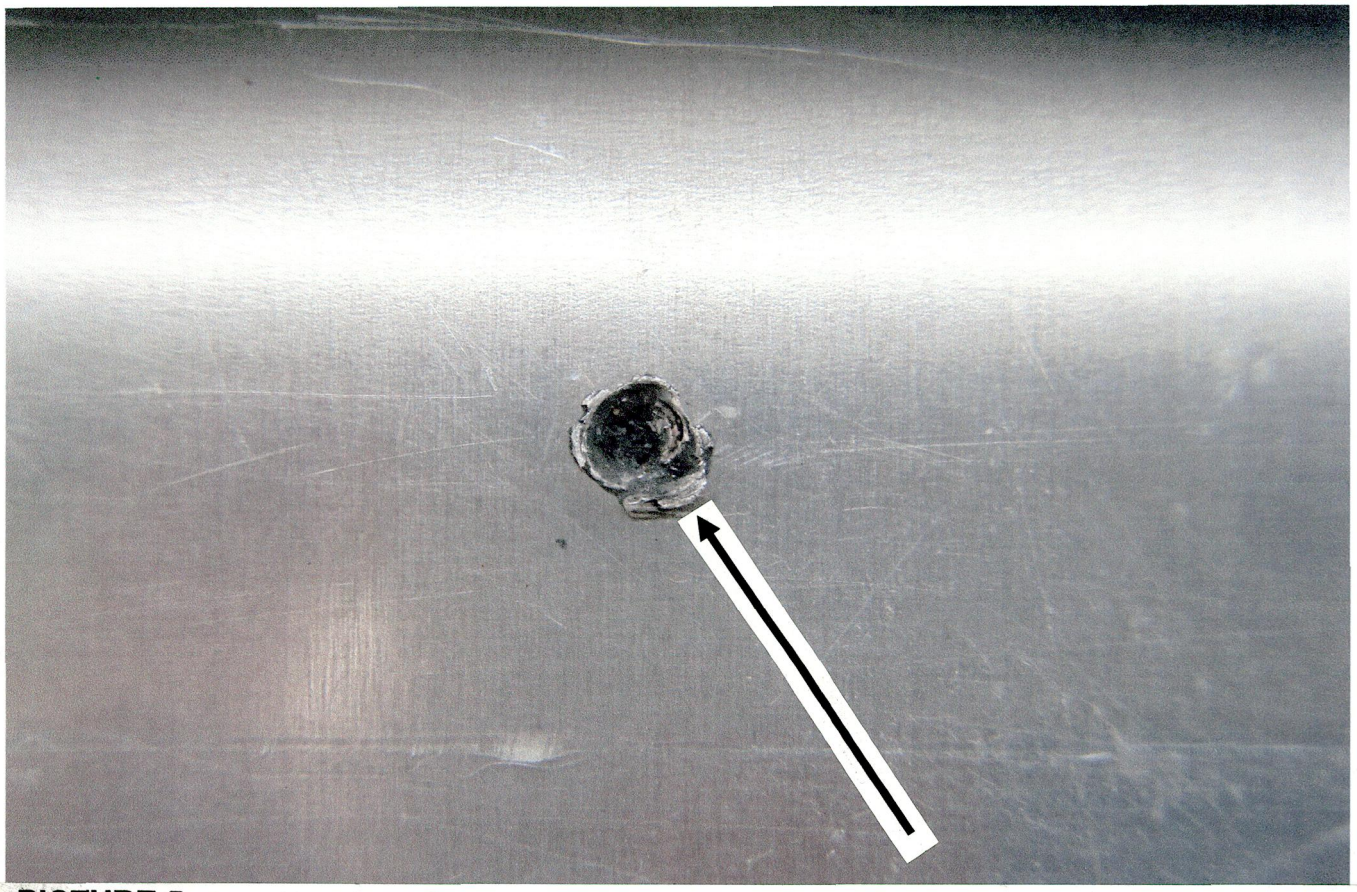
PICTURE 2
FIBERGLASS COVERED ALUMINUM FUEL TANK. CLOSE-UP VIEW
OF 4.5" X 8" SECONDARY FIBERGLASS COVER SURROUNDING FUEL
FILLER NECK. NOTE: 6 SCREWS SECURING SECONDARY COVER.



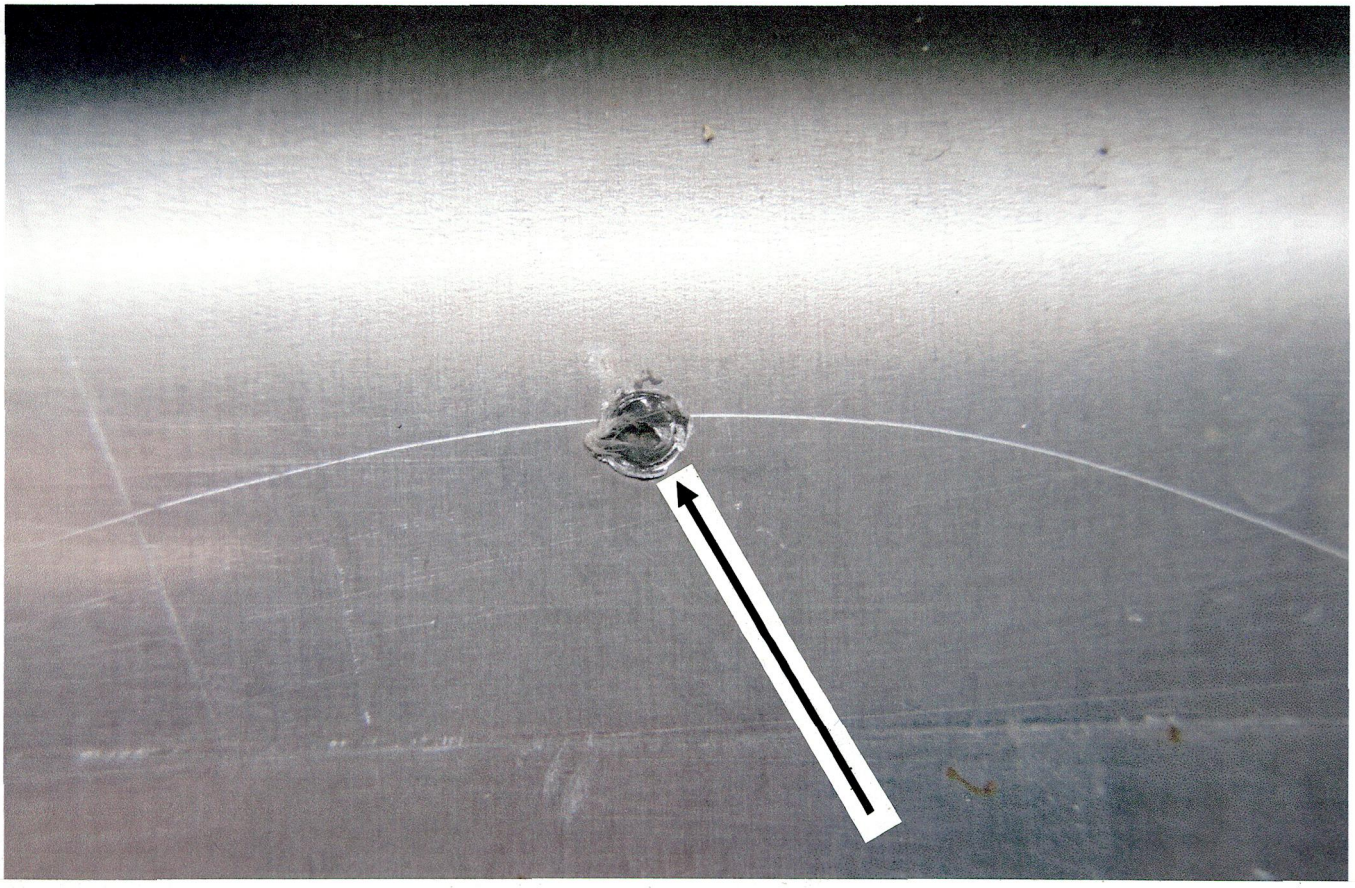
PICTURE 3
ALUMINUM FUEL TANK W/ FIBERGLASS COVERING REMOVED
NOTE: TWO HOLES IN ALUMINUM TANK



PICTURE 4
ALUMINUM FUEL TANK CLOSE-UP OF FILLER NECK AREA
AGAIN, NOTE: TWO HOLES, ONE RIGHT SIDE OF FILLER NECK AND ONE LEFT SIDE OF FILLER NECK



PICTURE 5
CLOSE-UP OF HOLE IN ALUMINUM TANK, LEFT SIDE OF FILLER NECK



PICTURE 6
CLOSE-UP OF HOLE IN ALUMINUM TANK, RIGHT SIDE OF FILLER NECK