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NOV 05 2012

Augusta, ME

October 13, 2012

National Transportation Safety Board
490 L'Enfant Plaza, SW
Washington, DC 20594

CERTIFIED – RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED

Dear National Transportation Safety Board:

I need your help. My concern originates from my fear my wheel will fall off and cause my vehicle to uncontrollably crash and kill my family, and several others if I'm on the Interstate.

Allow me to explain. I own a 2002 Winnebago "Vista" motor home which is mounted on a 2002 Volkswagen Euro van chassis, VIN WV3AB47072H. The Serial Number assigned by Winnebago is 10223C265964. This motor home is a Class C motor home with a sleeping loft hanging over the driver's compartment (I distinguish this since Winnebago now produces a "Vista" which is a Class A motor home and has the appearance of a small bus).

I lost one of the fasteners to a wheel rim (Volkswagen calls it a wheel bolt). I'm more familiar with the term "lug nut" and guess it translates to me to be a lug bolt instead of a lug nut. For this document, I will call it what Volkswagen calls it, i.e., wheel bolt (whatever you call it, five of them anchor the tire rim to the brake disk, thereby retaining the tire and rim on the vehicle).

My local Volkswagen dealer provided a replacement wheel bolt that was 25% shorter than the original factory bolt (30 mm long verses original 40 mm long). When questioned, the parts employee indicated the shorter bolt is specified for the 2002 Eurovan.

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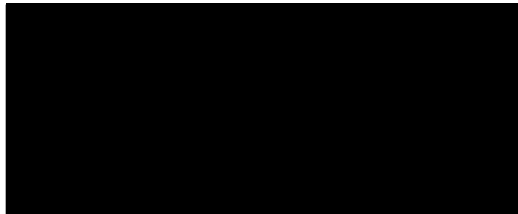
I called Winnebago to ask if the Volkswagen Eurovan was modified to handle the extra weight of the motor home, and thus longer wheel bolts were necessary to keep the wheel on the vehicle. Winnebago informed me that any chassis questions would require answers from "Volkswagen of America". Volkswagen of America answered my letter with a phone call saying they had records for only seven years after manufacture, and my question needed to be answered by a Volkswagen dealer. I returned to the dealer who searched, and searched, and searched and could only provide the wheel bolts that were 25% shorter than the original wheel bolts.

My final questions are: Can you help me find out if the shorter wheel bolts (30mm instead of the original 40mm) are long enough to hold my wheel on the vehicle.? Also, why can't the manufacturer supply replacement parts equivalent to the original strength and quality, or provide scientific and technical evidence that the wheel bolts that are 25% shorter are all that is necessary for the weight of the motor home?

I envision that someone has already lost all their wheel bolts during wheel service and replaced them with only what Volkswagen now provides. With 25% less bolt strength, will the bolts hold the wheel rim on the vehicle during a hard turn or slide as the vehicle hits a chuck hole in the road? This could easily become a story of interest on one of the networks evening news.

Thanks for any help you may provide.

Sincerely,



Augusta, ME

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