

INFORMATION Redacted PURSUANT TO THE FREEDOM OF  
INFORMATION ACT (FOIA), 5 U.S.C . 552(B)(6)

11-1100 1256-3555

NHTSA

Complaint Number 11001256

7-6-2017

AUG -4 2017

On May 17, 2017, I purchased a 2017 Forest River R-Pod from the estate of the original owner who bought the R-Pod 7 months before passing away on [REDACTED]

I am a retired class A truck driver. I've been towing travel trailers most of my adult life. My wife and I loaded the R-Pod with our camp chairs, outdoor stove, kitchen utensils and a few other odds/ends. I intended to take the trailer up the freeway a few exits just to confirm how it would handle on the freeway. I experienced very serious sway issues once I reached 50 MPH. My 2008 Toyota Tundra was alternating between 2 and wheels and I used the trailer break to regain control. By some miracle I regained control and drove home at under 50 MPH.

When I got home I started to investigate the problem. I was able to lift the tongue of the trailer with my hands, indicating there was not enough tongue weight in the front of the trailer. I got a bathroom scale out and found that tongue weight was only 125 lbs. The trailer tag says that the dry weight is 2,623 lbs. The Tongue weight should be 10-15% (262.3 lbs) of the trailers weight. I was [REDACTED] too light.

I unloaded the trailer completely, leaving just 5 gallons (41.7 lbs) of water in the water tank and weighed the trailer tongue weight again it was 215lbs, which is still 47 lbs too light to meet the minimum tongue weight for safe towing.

The trailer has a design flaw where all of the weigh for camping is behind the single axle. It can hold 36 gallons of fresh water but this adds 298.8 lbs behind the single axle. The pass-through storage compartment and spare tire are also behind the axle. The dinette is in the front of the trailer, leaving no option for storage in the front of the trailer. The axle is too far forward for the ratio of weigh behind the axle. In short, this means the trailer tongue weight is too light, totally empty and cannot be towed.

I searched the internet for R-Pod sway issues and found a forum on the Forest River site for R-Pod & the r-pod owners forum. On those sites I found other stories from people who have had similar problems, some resulting in vehicle accidents. People who've reported these issues have been told their vehicle is either too big or too small to pull the R-Pod or that they needed to purchase a weight distribution set up but these didn't solve the sway issues. I contacted Forest River to report the issue and seek remediation. Their initial response is that they are not aware of any issues with the R-Pod but they have redesigned the 2017 1/2 edition with an axle placed farther back and the pass-through storage moved to the front of the trailer. They also supposed my truck was too powerful to pull the trailer at 50 MPH which makes no sense. I question why they would make these design changes without being aware of the dangers of the earlier 2017 and prior year models.

Attach are my finding to back up my complaint.

[REDACTED]  
Alpine, Ca [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

NAM  
9.19.17  
40

Complaint # 11001256

[REDACTED]

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**From:** "Danielle Beber" <DBeber@forestriverinc.com>  
**Date:** Monday, June 26, 2017 5:23 AM  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** RE: RV Site - r-pod West Coast - Contact Us: "Tongue Weight"

Good Morning [REDACTED]

I do apologize but I have not heard of this issue before. We do not manufacture the R-Pods with a weight distribution installed on it, as it is not required. If that is something that you wish to install, you would need to contact a service center or dealership for that as it is considered a modification and we cannot advise on that. As for any recalls of any sort on the issue that you are having, we do not have any recalls.

Thank you-  
Danielle Beber  
Surveyor/Rpod  
Service and Warranty Administrator  
(574) 642-3119 opt. 2  
[dbeber@forestriverinc.com](mailto:dbeber@forestriverinc.com)  
fax: (574) 332-6801

-----Original Message-----

**From:** [Mailform@forestriverinc.com](mailto:Mailform@forestriverinc.com) [mailto:Mailform@forestriverinc.com]  
**Sent:** Sunday, June 25, 2017 5:26 PM  
**To:** Danielle Beber <DBeber@forestriverinc.com>; Samantha J. Hoover  
<sjhoover@forestriverinc.com>  
**Subject:** RV Site - r-pod West Coast - Contact Us: "Tongue Weight"

[REDACTED] as sent the following message in regards to r-pod West Coast:

" I purchased a 2017 R-Pod. I loaded it with water and used the storage area for my camp chairs, camp stove, etc. I got onto the freeway and once I reached 50 MPH I began to lose control of the trailer. I was able to regain control, get off the freeway and take the side streets home. I was able to lift the front of the trailer. The water tank and storage area are all behind the axle. I went online and found other similar experiences related to this poor design. Is there a recall available so I can have the weight distribution design issue addressed? I don't feel safe driving with this trailer nor do I feel safe selling it to anyone else. "

Click [mailto:\[REDACTED\]?subject=Tongue Weight](#) or copy the following e-mail address to reply to the user | [REDACTED]

Address Information

6/26/2017

Complaint # 11001256

[REDACTED]

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**From:** "Danielle Beber" <DBeber@forestriverinc.com>  
**Date:** Thursday, June 29, 2017 4:35 AM  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Attach:** 2015 owner manual.pdf  
**Subject:** RE: Found more information to prove "Tongue Weight" problem

Good Morning [REDACTED]

I do apologize, I have attached the owner's manual. Also for the R-Pods none of them have a hitch weight over 300 except for our garage units, due to their construction. The R-Pod 177 model, which is what you have has a hitch weight of 245 with your tanks emptied, no battery, and no propane as this is how they are when they leave the factory.

Thank you-

Danielle Beber

Surveyor/Rpod

Service and Warranty Administrator

(574) 642-3119 opt. 2

[dbeber@forestriverinc.com](mailto:dbeber@forestriverinc.com)

fax: (574) 352-6801

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, June 28, 2017 7:02 PM  
**To:** Danielle Beber <DBeber@forestriverinc.com>  
**Subject:** Re: Found more information to prove "Tongue Weight" problem

No Attachment sent.

Also remember that your broacher states that the the hitch weight is 345 pound empty but it is not, over a hundred pounds less.

Rick Beam  
Rick's Sign & Lighting Service  
P.O. Box 219  
Alpine, Ca. 91903

619-561-8688  
619-443-3488 fax  
619-244-7086 cell

**From:** [Danielle Beber](#)  
**Sent:** Wednesday, June 28, 2017 12:03 PM  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** RE: Found more information to prove "Tongue Weight" problem

7/3/2017

6/30/2017

## 2017 R-Pod model # 177

"Forest River" Danielle Beker, stated in her e-mail dated 6-29-2017 that the hitch weight is:

| Tongue Weight |
|---------------|
| 245 lbs       |

Safe Tongue weight 10-15% min.

R-Pod #177 empty trailer weight no battery, no propane tank filled

| Trailer Weight | 10% Tongue weight |
|----------------|-------------------|
| 2623           | 262.3             |

36 gallon water behind the axle:

| 1 Gallon | 5 Gallons | 10 Gallons | 18 Gallons |
|----------|-----------|------------|------------|
| 8.34 lbs | 41.7 lbs  | 83.4 lbs   | 150 lbs    |

Full with of trailer camping storage very back of trailer:

For every pound of weight behind the axle takes a pound of weight from the Tongue Weight:

*This trailer already has a negative tongue weight of 17.3 lbs from the factory unloaded:*



**Complaint #11001256**

# 2017 Forest River R-Pod 177



**Complaint #11001256**

Spare Tire

36 Gallon Water Tank

Pass ThroughCamping Storagre

6-30-2017

# 2017 Forest River R-Pod 177

Complaint #11001256

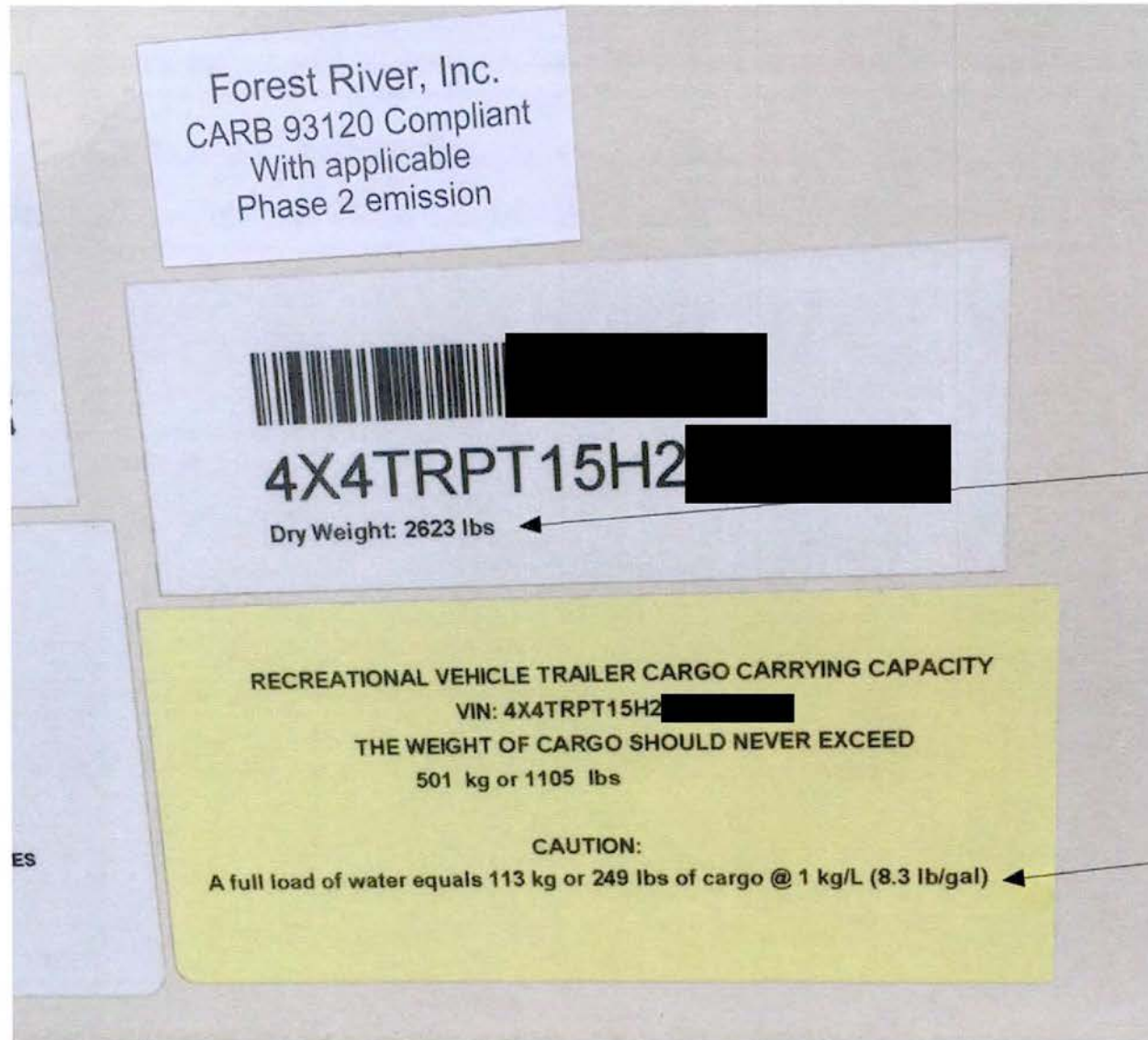


Trailer tongue weight completely empty with only 5 gallons of water in fresh water tank.

7-3-2017

**215 lbs**

# This is the tag on my trailer



Complaint #11001256

6-30-2017

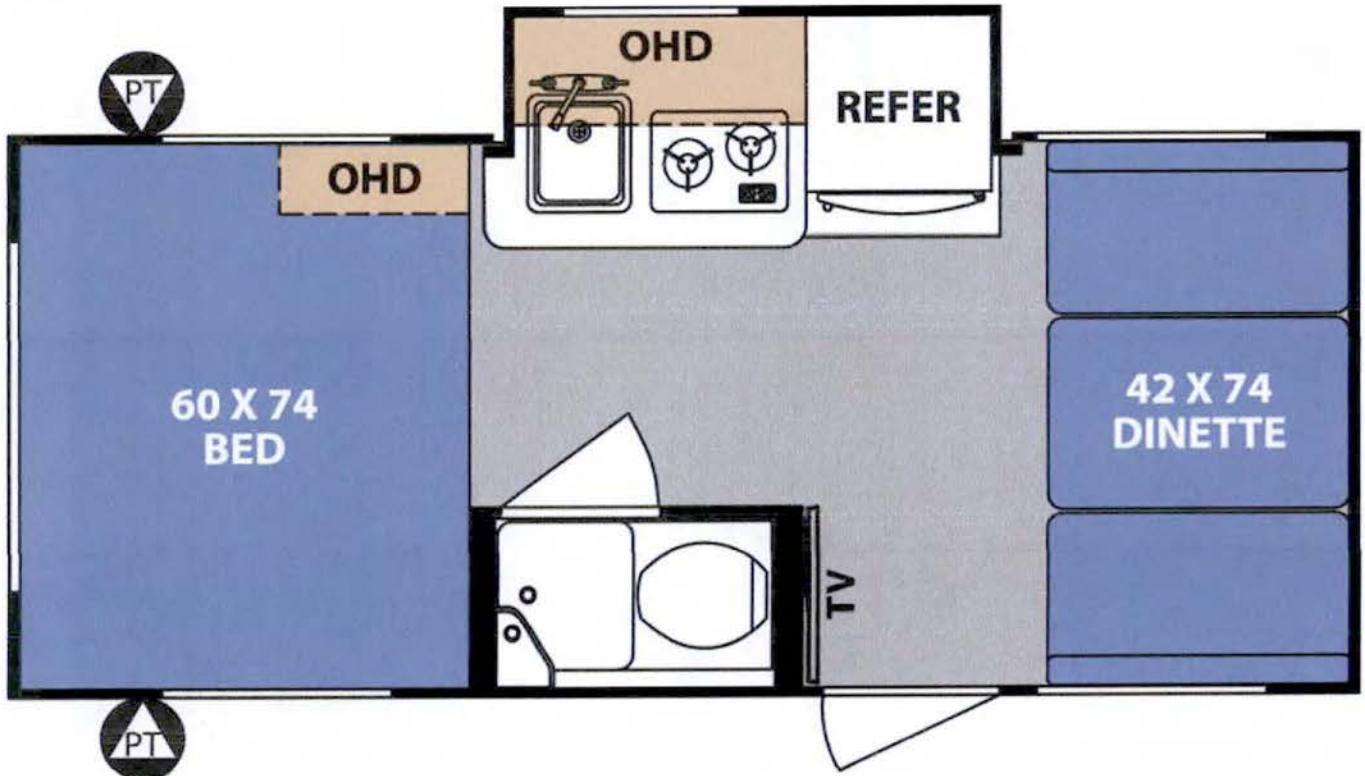
Trailer Weight

Water Weight

## 2017 Forest River R-Pod 177



Complaint # 11001256



RP-177

|                 |                |
|-----------------|----------------|
| Hitch Weight    | 245 lbs.       |
| UVW             | 2437 lbs.      |
| GVWR            | TBD            |
| CCC             | 1308 lbs.      |
| Exterior Length | 18' 8"         |
| Exterior Height | 9' 7"          |
| Exterior Width  | 96"            |
| Fresh Water     | 36 gal.        |
| Gray Water      | 30 gal.        |
| Black Water     | 30 gal.        |
| Awning Size     | Opt.<br>R-dome |

Note: Specifications are subject to change without notice.  
[www.forestriverinc.com/RV](http://www.forestriverinc.com/RV)

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## Determining Trailer Tongue Weight

In order to select the correct components to safely tow your trailer, you need to know its tongue weight. This is the weight that the fully loaded trailer exerts downward on the hitch ball of the tow vehicle. If you don't know the tongue weight of your trailer, there are several different ways you can determine it.

1. Tongue weight scale
2. Weigh Safe ballmount
3. Bathroom scale
4. Commercial scale

**Remember**, if you intend to use a weight distribution system, you will want to keep in mind the weight of the contents that you will carry in your vehicle behind the rear axle. You need to know this because the spring bars, which provide the support in a weight distribution system are available in different sizes. And any weight that is located behind your rear axle affects the performance of the spring bars. You will need to include this weight so you can select spring bars of the proper size for your vehicle and trailer.

### Tongue Weight Scale

We offer a heavy-duty [tongue weight scale](#) that quickly, easily and accurately allows you to get the weight of the trailer tongue. This scale can weigh a trailer tongue with a weight of up to 2,000 lbs. Since tongue weight is typically 10% to 15% of the weight of the trailer, this scale can handle a gross trailer weight of up to 20,000 lbs.



These images show the tongue weight scale in use. Be sure that the trailer is level and parked on level ground when you weigh it.



[Shop trailer tongue weight scales](#)

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Department:

NVS-200,210,300,010

Phone:

Purchase Order  
(ItemVarName4)

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CONFIRMATION

Route



PS00001000014

EP14F July 2013

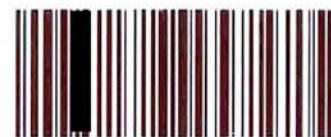
05:12:51:05

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Alpine, Ca.

US Department of Transportation  
National Hwy. Traffic Administration  
Office of Defects Investigations NVS-210  
1200 New Jersey Ave South East  
West Building  
Washington DC, 20590



UNITED STATES