

AUG 13 2019

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

August 3, 2019

CL-11245712-7657

[REDACTED]
Englewood, Florida [REDACTED]

U S Department of Transportation
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

To whom it May Concern:

I am writing to you to express my safety concerns that have arisen on our 2015 Salem Hemisphere 5th wheel produced by Forest River Inc. The serial Number of our unit is 4X4FSBC23FL [REDACTED]

We have recently discovered that there is serious metal fatigue and cracking of the welds supporting the 5th wheel hitch. The camper itself is beginning to show extreme signs of damage being caused by stress that have been initiated by the failure of the welds and subsequently the fifth wheel hitch, the main structure of the RV.

I have written to Forest River and have enclosed a copy of the letter and pictures of the damage that I have sent to them.

Will you please investigate this very serious issue? I now own an RV which I cannot use, is unsafe to tow, am unable to sell and cannot get repaired due to the seriousness of this problem. This unit and others like it need to be recalled immediately to be inspected for similar type failures before someone suffers a catastrophic accident. If it is happening to our unit, it could happen to similar units. I would hate to see this happen.

Your immediate attention and response to this very serious defect is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,
[REDACTED]

EA
8-20-19
WO

TK

August 2, 2019

Peter Liegl
Forest River Inc.
55470 County Road 1
Elkhart, IN 46514

Dear Mr. Liegl or Current President

My wife and I are owners of a 2015 Salem Hemisphere 5th wheel Serial Number 4X4FSBC23FL [REDACTED] which we purchased when it was 6 months old from the original owner. This is our second Forest River RV.

Recently we traveled to Kentucky to camp with our children and we noticed that a gap had developed on the passenger side of the camper in front of the battery box. It continued to get bigger the farther we traveled. I contacted Forest River and spoke to Tara Maisonneuve in customer service. She asked that I send her pictures which I did. I emphasized that I thought there was something structural causing the problem. After reviewing the pictures, she copped and attitude and told me that it is out of warranty and reminded me that we are the second owner and that there was nothing she could do. I asked her to have someone else look at the pictures and never heard from her. Called her back and was told that it looked like water damage and I should take it to a dealer. I pressed her on which one and where it might be located but was told that any of your dealers could fix it or I could take it to any body shop.

When we returned to Florida, I noticed additional damage. Now the door to the propane tanks wouldn't open properly and the frame work around the door had separated from the body of the 5th wheel. Further inspection showed gaps where they hadn't been before, screws popping out, a crack in the exterior wall near the top of the slide out and some cracking on the caulking on the roof where the front cap is joined.

I spoke to a local RV shop and he suggested that our insurance company would cover such damage. I filed a claim with Progressive and they sent out an appraiser. When he looked at what was going on, he told me that it was probably being caused by a failure in the 5th wheel hitch area. He told me to take it to an RV dealer and have them remove the underbelly which covers the fifth wheel so that he could inspect it. At this point, I realized that it might not be safe to tow it anywhere considering the recent increase in damage and by his suggestion that the problem could be in the hitch.

I asked him if I were to remove the underbelly myself, would he still come back and look to see if it would be covered. He told me no problem and said he too would not feel comfortable towing it in its current condition, not knowing what was the cause and how severe the damage

could be. Upon removing the underbelly, the cause became evident. The metal frame and entire front section of the hitch were cracked in several locations. After further inspection, we were able to determine that the main caused was not visible and was above the center storage area. It appears that the only way to view this area is to remove the side and basically dismantle the entire front section of the 5th wheel.

At this point, he denied the claim and told me that the reason was that this is a manufacturers defect. The letter received from Progressive denying this claim is enclosed.

This is clearly a real safety issue and I feel fortunate that it did not come apart while we towed it home from Kentucky. It appears to be so serious that it is not safe to tow and it may not even be repairable. The cost to repair could far exceed the value of the RV, plus I don't know that I would trust anyone other than the factory to take on such a monumental task.

I have enclosed pictures of the damaged welds. Many are cracked and many show signs of porosity when originally built. I did have an experienced welding company look at the welds and, in his opinion, they should never have passed inspection.

I am asking for your help. Where do I go from here? I now own a defective RV that I can't use, can't sell, and can't get repaired. Even the welder did not want to weld it for fear of possible repercussions in the future.

My hope is that Forest River being the reputable company that you are, can see the potential liability and will stand behind your product. If it is happening to our unit, it may be happening to others. A recall may be in order.

I am forwarding a copy of this Letter and of the photos to the NHSTA as I feel it truly is a defect and a safety issue and needs to be addressed before someone experiences a catastrophic failure.

I anxiously look forward to hearing from you. My cell phone number is [REDACTED], email: [REDACTED] and my address is [REDACTED] Englewood, Florida [REDACTED]

Sincerely Yours
[REDACTED]

503274 10124 1 AB 0.412 CLTR501C 035 010124

Underwritten By:
Progressive Select Insurance
Company

Claim Number: [REDACTED]
Loss Date: June 27, 2019
Document Date: July 18, 2019
Page 1 of 2

[REDACTED]
ENGLEWOOD, FL [REDACTED]



claims.progressive.com

Track the status and details of your claim,
e-mail your representative or report a
new claim.

Claim Information

Progressive has completed our investigation into the above captioned loss. We regret to inform you that the damages reported for this loss are not covered under our insuring agreement for Comprehensive or Collision coverage.

Our inspection of the 2015 Salem by Forest River Hemisphere Lite, and our discussion with you, indicates the damage is due to a manufacturer defect. The damages were not caused by a sudden, direct, and accidental loss. In addition, the claimed damages are specifically excluded under exclusion number 8.

Progressive Motor home Policy [REDACTED] Form 3651 Edition (07/10) provides in pertinent part:

PART I - DAMAGE TO A VEHICLE

INSURING AGREEMENT - COLLISION COVERAGE

If you pay the premium for this coverage, we will pay for sudden, direct, and accidental loss to a covered vehicle or non-owned vehicle resulting from collision.

INSURING AGREEMENT - COMPREHENSIVE COVERAGE

If you pay the premium for this coverage, we will pay for sudden, direct, and accidental loss to a covered vehicle or non-owned vehicle that is not caused by collision.

A loss not caused by collision includes:

1. impact with an animal (including a bird);
2. explosion or earthquake;
3. fire;
4. malicious mischief or vandalism;
5. missiles or falling objects;
6. riot or civil commotion;
7. theft or larceny;
8. windstorm, hail, water, or flood; or
9. breakage of glass not caused by collision.

EXCLUSIONS - READ THE FOLLOWING EXCLUSIONS CAREFULLY. IF AN EXCLUSION APPLIES, COVERAGE WILL NOT BE AFFORDED UNDER THIS PART I.



ALL BROKEN
WELOS HAVE
EFFECT ON
MAIN TOWING
HITCH.

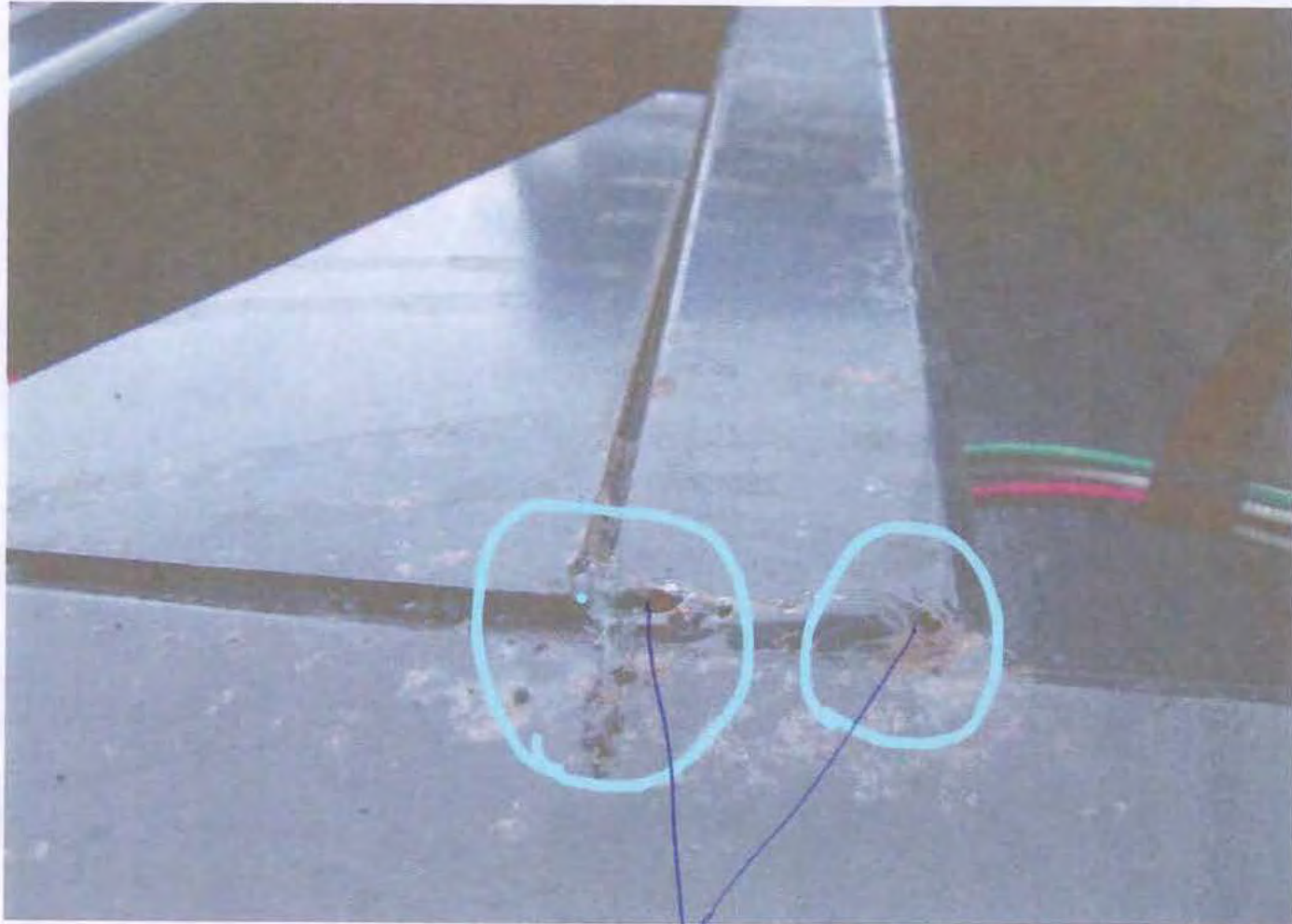


AREA WHERE CRACKING & CREAKING
CAN BE HEARD - STEEL FRAMEWORK ALL
CONCEALED. BELIEVE THIS TO BE
CAUSE OF ALL PROBLEMS.

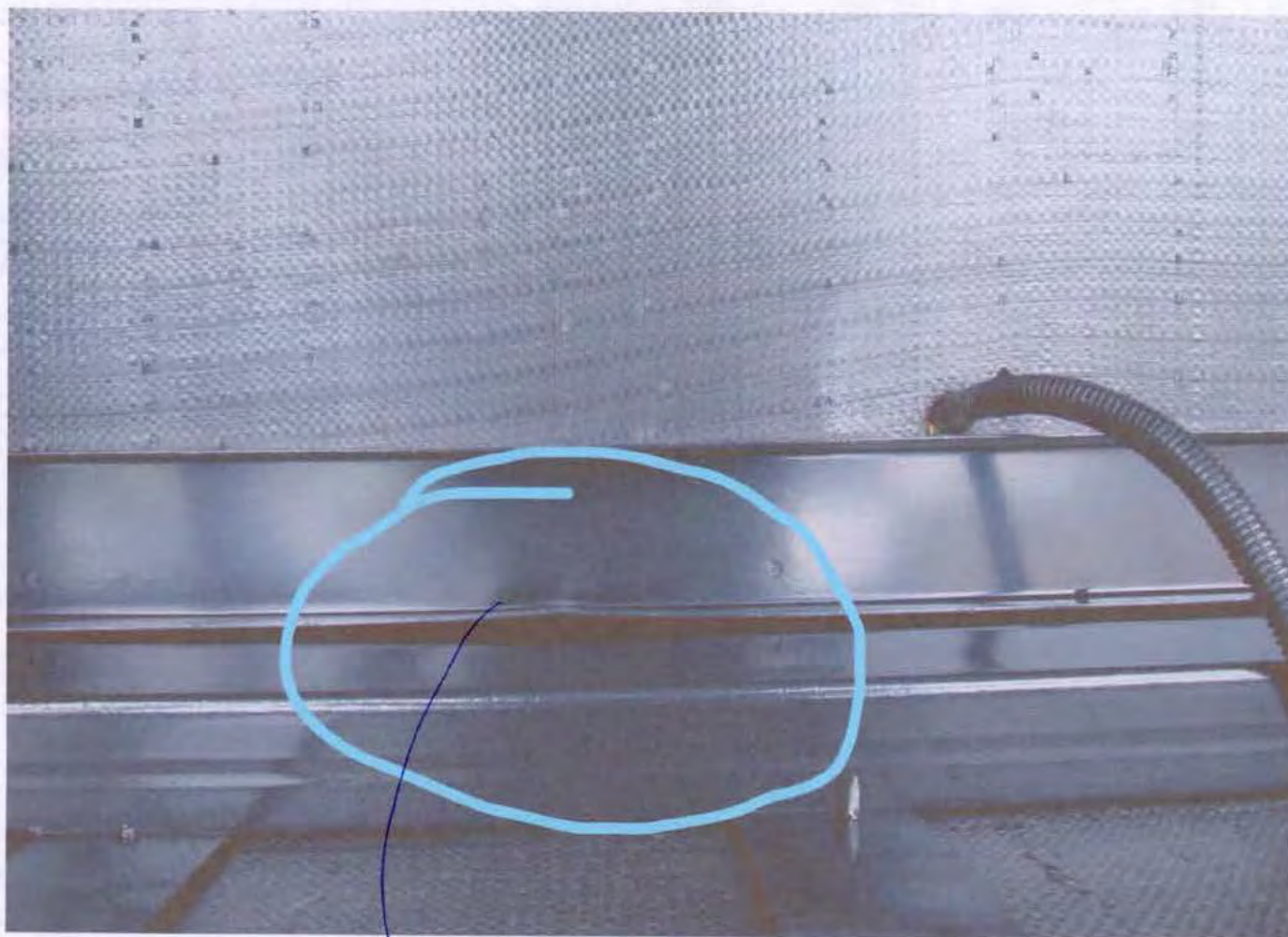
TOP



GAPS
OPENING
UP EVERY WHERE

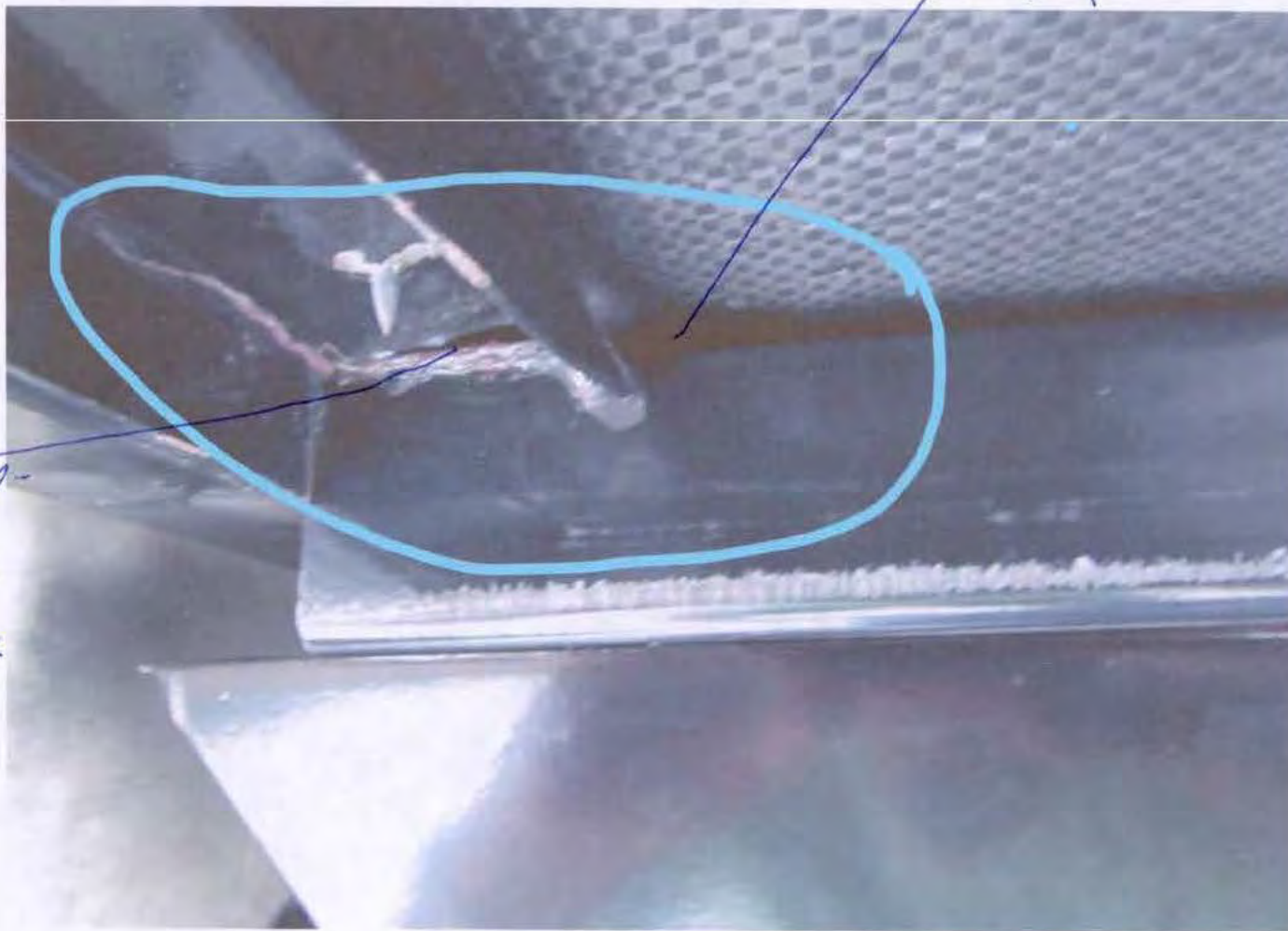


NOTICE POROSITY IN WELDS -
SHOULD NEVER PASS A QUALITY
CONTROL INSPECTION -



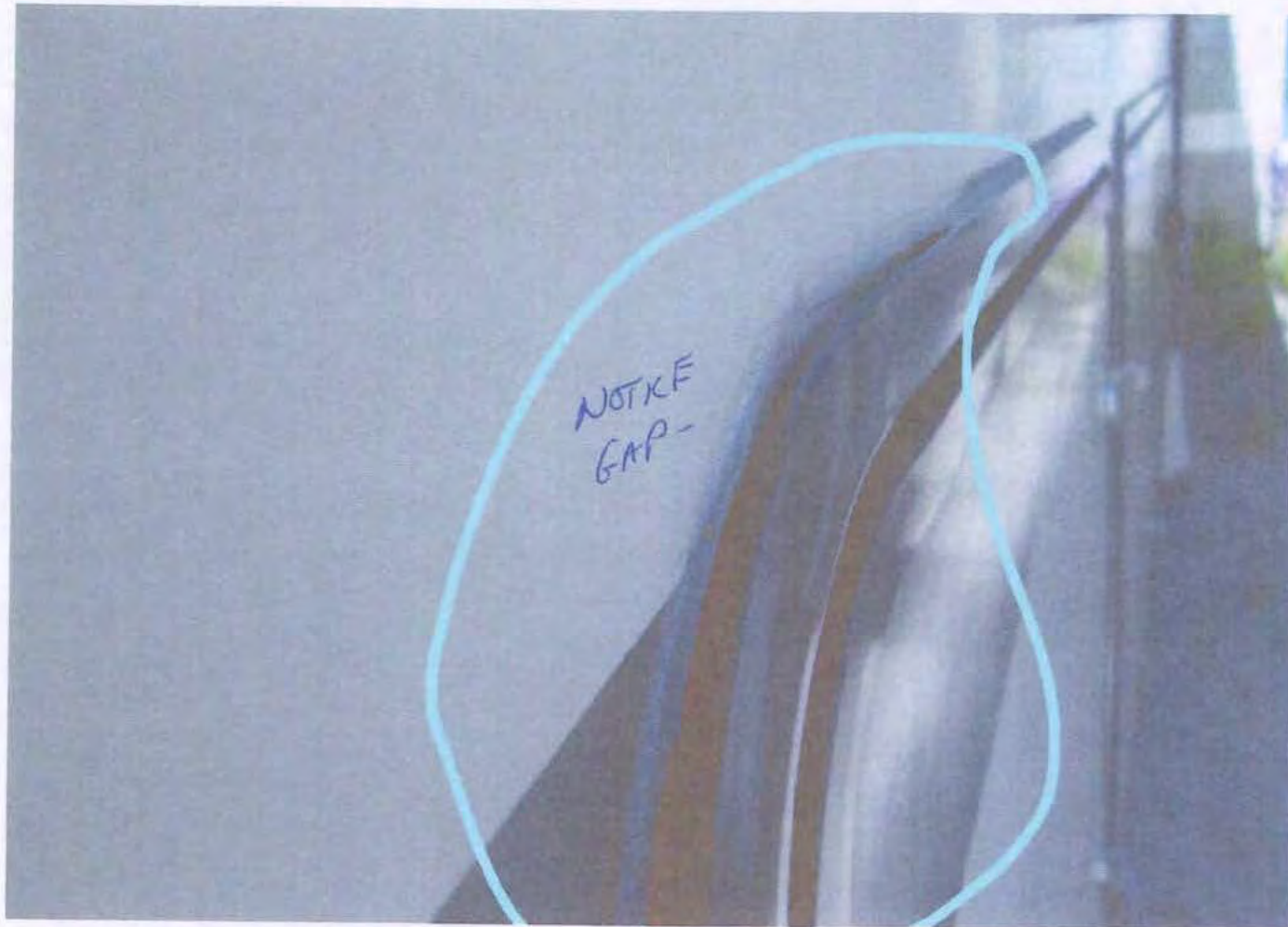
NOTE BUCKLE IN FRAME RAIL -
MUST BE BEING STRESSED WHEN
FRAME TWISTS -

FLOOR OF
BED ROOM GAP -
CAN STICK YOUR
FINGER IN IT.



THIS CRACK GETS
SMALLER WHEN
CAMPER IS JARKED -
OPENS UP WHEN
LOADED ON TRUCK

TOP



PROPANE TANK FRAMEWORK - NOTICE HOW IT
IS PULLING AWAY FROM BODY OF THE RV.
ENTIRE FRONT SECTION OF THE 5TH WHEEL IS
TWISTING -



UPPER PASS SIDE NEAR BED ROOM SIDE -
BUCKLES + CRACKED FIBERGLASS. EVIDENT IT
IS STRESSED.



Shows How FAR GAP OPENS UP -

GAP OPENS UP WHEN LOADED ON TRUCK
FROM RV FLEXING- ENTIRE FRONT PART OF
RV MOVES + TWISTS.-



MOLDING
BUCKLED
FROM
STRESS



ALUMINUM FRAMEWORK WELDS BROKEN
ON FRONT SUPPORT FOR STORAGE LOCKER -

PRIORITY MAIL

- DATE OF DELIVERY SPECIFIED*
- USPS TRACKING™ INCLUDED*
- INSURANCE INCLUDED*
- PICKUP AVAILABLE
- * Domestic only



Department of Transportation

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