

From:

[REDACTED]

Albuquerque, NM [REDACTED]

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OF INFORMATION ACT (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. 552(B)(6)

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ORD NEF 189 MAIL

To:

Forest River
P.O. Box 3030
Elkhart, IN 46515

R-Pod
888 SE Sheridan Rd.
Sheridan, OR 97378

NHTSA
1200 New Jersey Ave SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

NHTSA, This letter was sent to Forest River at the addresses above. If it helps prevent others from going through what I've been through, or worse, it'll have been worthwhile. Take this information at face value, my unit has been (mostly) fixed. There's no doubt, after chatting with others, that inspection of other units will reveal similar defects. I don't know if this is Forest River's horrendous quality control or if it's industry standard. I truly hope it's not the latter, but have my doubts.

To Whom It May Concern:

I purchased a 2019 R-Pod 189 "10th Anniversary" on November 16th 2019. I am writing to express my profound disappointment with your product. I will not mention the dealer (only that they're in Nevada), they are irrelevant, although; quite disappointing themselves.

I know Forest River is just a subsidiary of the immense Berkshire Hathaway with dozens of plants and thousands employees, of which R-Pod is only a fragment. I also know that I am merely one miniscule sale in a billion dollar corporation, a microbe to you. I also know, from years of experience in industry and military, that the issues I describe here are not unknown to you, they're simply acceptable. I have never written a letter of dissatisfaction to a company and rarely complain, but the appalling workmanship I have experienced with this travel trailer is infuriating.

I'm 46 years old with an electromechanical background, am familiar with construction, automotive mechanics, and electrical systems. I spent some years in automotive sales, service, and management, equipment manufacturing, and am currently an Aviation Maintenance Officer in the US Navy, where I manage aircraft maintenance. To put it simply, I know quality, know management, and can fix things (most unsuspecting R-Pod customers are not so lucky).

RR

The largely hidden problems created by your inept manufacturing are difficult to discern at a glance. I noticed some issues during the sale, but the trailer was BRAND NEW causing my brain to not compute. The sink drain was cross threaded and the pipe "secured" to a piece of wood with two partially installed screws sort of bent around the PVC, laughable had I not spent \$24,000! As soon as possible, I got proper pipe clamps, tore out the poorly installed brace board, reinstalled it properly, then correctly secured the plumbing. I got on the bed, just to get a feel for it, and heard cracking. This should have caused alarm, but again, BRAND NEW trailer! As you may know, the mind is powerful when it perceives something to be a certain way, i.e. BRAND NEW! I also noticed the radio received no reception and console components were mounted crooked, strange for a NEW unit. Little did I know...

Once home, I checked the radio. By the way, I live 80 miles from a dealer. Upon opening the door, to my surprise, the radio was hanging out of the console by wires because an idiot cut a huge ROUND hole to mount a small SQUARE radio. The hole was so big that the flange screws weren't grabbing anything! The mess was hidden with edge molding. I had to fit plywood over the console to mount the radio. Don't even get me started on the unbundled wad of wiring crammed behind the radio. I fixed that too.

The radio still didn't work so I did some troubleshooting, discovering no antenna connection. Removing the antenna revealed that the coaxial cable was cut when an idiot gouged out a hole to make room for the connector against the roof, cutting the cable, then installing the antenna, leaving the cut cable hidden underneath! Your idiot then torqued the metal mounting screws into the plastic base, breaking EVERY receptacle! You don't torque metal screws into plastic with a power drill (unless your stupid)! The only thing keeping the antenna from blowing off was friction. YOU PUT OTHER DRIVERS AT RISK!

I repaired the gaping hole in the roof that your idiot made, bought a decent whip antenna, and properly mounted it. Radio works now, no thanks to you.

While on the roof... By the way, I questioned the dealer as to why no ladder and was told there's no reason to get on the roof, even though there are things up there, to include a solar panel, which leads to... I noticed the panel was heavily oxidized. I scratched it with my thumb nail and plowed up a little pile of severely damaged material. To be blunt, the panel was junk. I'm not sure how long it takes a solar panel to get that way, but if that's what you're installing, I understand why you don't install a ladder. Needless to say, I replaced it. Not cheap, but since you installed oxidized junk, I researched, found what I wanted and swapped it. Would have been nice to just have a quality panel to begin with though.

All benefit-of-the-doubt is now gone. I took off all removable panels and components to perform a full inspection. The true scale of atrocious workmanship and safety concerns quickly became evident. I have never felt so disheartened. Electrical components were wired in through jagged holes busted through the walls with, apparently, a blunt object. Not once did I see evidence of a proper hole bit or hole saw being used. Obviously, as long as the damage and ugliness is hidden from view, it's ok.

1) The bedframe was a joke, thus the cracking noise! There was half-inch square molding mounted around the front of the trailer, with plywood on top, and one support in the middle. All bed weight was supported by the three strips of molding. The middle support was uselessly split. The molding was split everywhere a screw was driven! A very stupid person with a drill forced 1" screws straight into thin

molding, with NO PRE-HOLES, and NO COMMON SENSE! Additionally, there were giant staples everywhere, also splitting the wood! What is the deal with staples? For crying-out-loud, take the staple gun away from the morons and teach them to properly install screws! Driving a staple into a cross member from above, when the loading force on the member is downward, is pointless! That adds zero structural integrity and weakens it! In the wise words of a 10 year old child who saw this unfunny joke, "Why did they do that, it's not doing anything." This defies common sense and basic craftsmanship, plus a 10 year old quickly identified how stupid it was! Nothing was holding up the bed! To add insult to injury, the area under the bed was full of trash! There was wire clippings, saw dust, clumps of foam, screws, wire ties, and even a candy wrapper under the bed! Disgusting.

After cleaning up the garbage, I bought 24' of one-by-twos, removed all the split wood your idiots installed, and built a proper lattice structure under the bed. The bed is now solid and can safely hold up anyone on it. Done properly with screws, NO STAPLES!

2) There was a rickety false wall built around the DC-AC inverter, also under the bed (fun fact, I asked the dealer where the inverter was, they had no idea). Why the inverter was hidden within a fully enclosed false wall with no access is a mystery. I tore out the false wall and was in disbelief, another trash dump! The entire box formed by the false wall was full of trash! What the !@# is up with the trash? Obviously, as long as trash is well hidden, it's fine. Anyway, the inverter, which weighs 12 pounds, was attached to the wall with ONE screw and falling off! There are four mounting holes, only two were utilized, and only one corner was still attached to the wall because an idiot installed the screws directly into thin particle board! The other screw had fallen out. Also, the inverter receptacle was NOT mounted, it was hanging by Romex! Additionally, the inverter wasn't even plugged in!

Again, cleaned up the garbage, removed the inverter and installed it with rubber mounts to the floor. Had to cut and re-install the heavy leads because they were partially cut through by the idiot who stripped the insulation when installing. It's dangerous to cut lead strands on an inverter, especially when you plan to hide it in a false wall! I properly mounted the power receptacle. Not only was the receptacle not mounted, it was hidden within the false wall. Another dangerous thing to do!

3) Once the inverter was properly mounted, I inspected the wiring in that area. A large wire bundle comes up through the floor right there. Everything in that area is hidden by the false wall so unsuspecting owners have no idea. I placed my hand through the hole where all the wires go between the bathroom wall. These wires feed the control panel in the bathroom and outlets on both sides of the wall. When installing the perplexing false wall, to hide your pathetic attempt to mount an inverter, your idiots installed 1" screws through thin particle board, straight into the wire bundle!

I cut holes in the thin particle board to inspect the inside of the wall where several wires were routed. I discovered that where outlets are mounted, they installed plywood to the backside of the wall (inside the wall) as backer boards. They installed the outlet backer boards with half-inch long staples directly into the wall. The staples went through the backer boards and straight into the wires that are inside the wall! There were more damaged wires hidden in the wall! What the !@# is up with the damn staples!?

How unbelievably !@#\$\$ can you be? Romex cable has power and ground inside it! Shorting out these wires with screws and staples can cause a fire! These issues are hidden! Unsuspecting owners have NO IDEA! I discovered staples behind every outlet backer board throughout the trailer, every one of which had wiring running through the area. This is a catastrophe waiting to happen! With a little common sense, I fixed all of it. Can't speak for other poor owners out there.

4) At this point I realize the electrical system is unsafe. Inspections revealed battery cable leads crimped so hard that three wires were broken and the power cable was 50% cut through when an idiot improperly stripped the insulation. The water heater relay was hanging loose under the bed, not mounted. There was a rat nest of wadded up wiring under the sink pedestal, no attempt to bundle the wires. That's where I found the slide out controller haphazardly screwed to the wall with ONE screw. There's a junction block underneath the trailer that had two broken wires, again due to some idiot improperly stripping the wires, and two more wires nearly cut through. FYI, wires DO NOT carry their designed load when strands are CUT, and cutting strands can cause wire to break! Teach your morons how to install wiring!!! I removed the main power converter and sure enough, installed like crap! The converter grounding block was NOT mounted, just flopping around behind the wall! What the!@# is up with the unmounted components!? Additionally, four ground wires were broken due to over torqued set screws! One of the set screws was torqued so hard I couldn't even back it out! What the!@#\$ is the deal with over torqueing delicate equipment? Do you have monkeys building these units? Pathetic!

I bought all the correct hardware, new battery lead ends, new grounding block, extra wire, ties, mounting clamps, ect..., and fixed the electrical disaster as best I could. I now know that everything I can access and inspect is safe, problem is I'm still concerned about what's hidden.

5) Enough about electrical, the issues I found are too many to cover entirely. The rant above should give you a pretty good idea... moving on to structural integrity. I got under this pile of junk and, of course, more issues. I already mentioned the junction block that was apparently installed by a Neanderthal, but possibly even worse, two bolts that attach the horizontal steel cross member tubes to the steel upright frame were not even pulling the two structural pieces together! There was a 1/4" gap between the parts meaning the bottom of this piece of crap was not even firmly attached to the rest of the trailer! I personally could not fix this, so I took it to a machine shop. After the machinists finished laughing, he was able to remove the cross threaded bolts and install new bolts that firmly drew the parts together. This was humiliating. I doubt I'd even want to see the structural welding.

I could go on and on about the awful workmanship: wall seam molding falling off; the slide out isn't level; carpentry gaps everywhere (the carpentry is laughable); components mounted crooked; I've lost count of the stripped out screws (for the love of God, teach you monkeys how to install screws!); ect; ect... Sadly these issues are not immediately noticeable when one is excitedly purchasing a new trailer. These things become noticeable once the excitement wears off and you start looking closer at craftsmanship. The heart sinks, it's a bad feeling...

I don't want to extend this letter much more (frankly it's depressing me), so will wrap it up with the worst experience yet (since it didn't burn before I fixed the wiring). No reason to get on the roof? Well,

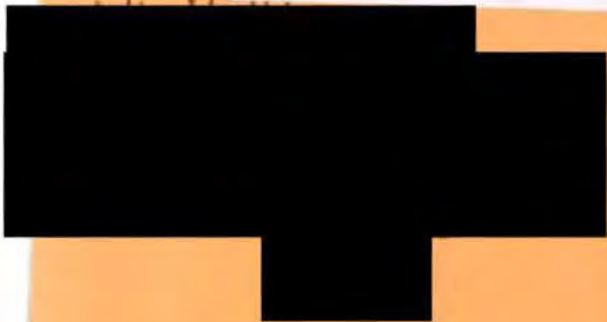
to make a long story short, it rained, the roof leaked, and my bed was soaked! Now I'm a calm person, not a complainer, and have never written a letter like this, but entering the trailer that rainy night after work (I use this for work by the way) and plopping down on a wet bed with water running through TWO light fixtures, I lost it! I had to take three vacation days and get a motel room to deal with this! I got ON THE ROOF AGAIN to seal it and found out WHY it leaked. Your primate buffoons poured white goop around the components, but missed seams!!!! Agghhhh!!! I hate this thing! Unfortunately, as we all know, you take a loss the second you sign the line when buying new, so I'm stuck with it, besides, I've already spent time and money fixing it, so might as well make the best of it at this point. With workmanship this poor though, I doubt I've seen the end.

BRAND NEW "10th Anniversary" trailer. This is the mess you make after 10 years? Even if I lived across the street from the dealer, having them practically rebuild the unit under warranty would never have been practical, besides, as mentioned, I use it for work and don't have time to leave it at a dealership that's just as incompetent as you are. I fixed it myself so know it's done right. I have sold, repaired, and managed in the automotive industry and have never seen anything like this.

Forest River touts "quality" and "satisfaction" on the website, even showing a great view of the final check building, oh so beautiful. I even saw video of your outstanding manufacturing process LOL! What's hard to understand is that the R-Pod is built with good components and materials. You're taking this stuff and giving it to a bunch of !@\$% moronic idiots who obviously have no training, no common sense, no pride, no professionalism, no sense of craftsmanship at all, and allowing them to turn this collection of decent products into a \$24,000 pile of !@\$ It's sad. Why bother? Perhaps if you applied the same amount of effort to building RVs as you do to your fancy website, I wouldn't be writing this letter.

In my humble opinion, your absolute disregard for quality is deplorable. I cannot believe this is being sold to the public. I cannot believe people can do work this bad and remain employed. I cannot believe you can claim this piece of crap was quality checked! The saddest part (besides the fact that I feel like the world's biggest sucker and this has been a nightmare experience) is that this utter failure of manufacturing is MADE IN THE USA. Forest River should be deeply ashamed, although; I know your not.





NHTSA
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