



U.S. Department
of Transportation

National Highway
Traffic Safety
Administration

400 Seventh Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590

CERTIFIED MAIL
RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED

FEB 13 2004

Mr. William G. Conway, Jr.
Forest River, Inc.
3010 College Ave,
P. O. Box 124
Goshen, Indiana 46527

NVS-214gtb
PE04-013

Dear Mr. Conway:

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration conducts investigations of potential safety defects in motor vehicles and equipment. This function is performed under the authority of the National Highway Vehicle Safety Act, which provides for safety defect notification and recall campaigns to reduce accidents, injuries, and deaths.

This letter is to inform you that the Office of Defects Investigation (ODI) of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has opened a Preliminary Evaluation (PE04-013) to investigate frame cracks in 1999 Model Year (MY) Fifth Wheel Trailers manufactured by Forest River, Inc.

ODI is concerned that cracks in the frame structure could allow unintended and excessive deflection potentially affecting vehicle control. ODI is further concerned that cracks could propagate and result in either buckling or fracture of the frame causing or contributing to a vehicle crash.

(1) VIN 4X4FSEM25XC021801

On December 18, 2003 ODI received a complaint (VIN 4X4FSEM25XC021801, Vehicle Owner's Questionnaire VOQ 10051803) from an original owner (*) of a 36-foot 1999 Forest River Fifth Wheel vehicle. The complaint alleges that the vehicle frame exhibited cracks in several areas. In response to the ensuing inquiry from ODI, Forest River responded to ODI in a letter dated December 31, 2003 and provided information regarding "Operations and Procedures" that Forest River provides to owners regarding proper loading and weight distribution of their trailers.



DOT AUTO SAFETY HOTLINE
888-DASH-2-DOT
888-327-4238

(*) The owner has informed ODI that this vehicle has been under her control and use since the time of original purchase although her mother's name appears "on record" as the original owner of the vehicle.

A copy of the VOQ, relevant photographs of VIN 4X4FSEM25XC021801, and Forest River's correspondence are enclosed as Attachment A.

(2) VIN 4X4TSAP29WA011595

On January 12, 2004, ODI received a complaint (VOQ 10053847, VIN 4X4TSAP29WA011595) from the second (**) owner of a 38-foot 1999 (built November, 1998) Forest River Fifth Wheel Trailer alleging that the frame in the area of the axles and spring mounting pillar had cracked and that an underbody inspection had found that a section of one frame cross-member in the proximity of the waste water drain pipe been cut and removed from the vehicle, presumably during the manufacture of the vehicle.

(**) The vehicle owner has informed ODI that the owner's parents were the original purchasers of this vehicle and transferred ownership to the current owner (their son) in late 2002. Due to the family relationship to the original purchaser, the current owner claims to be familiar with the entire history of the vehicle (e.g. fewer than 10,000 miles accumulated; garage stored).

A copy of the VOQ report and relevant photographs of VIN 4X4TSAP29WA011595 are enclosed as Attachment B.

(3) VIN 4X4TSMH232T101517

ODI has researched past similar complaints and found one report (VOQ 8009651) filed in May 2002 in which an original owner had complained of frame cracks in a 2002 Forest River Fifth Wheel Trailer VIN 4X4TSMH232T101517. ODI has contacted this owner and learned that the vehicle had been returned to (repurchased) the local Forest River, Inc. dealership in 2002 shortly after the owner had reported the concern to ODI.

In order for my staff to evaluate this issue, certain information is requested.

Unless otherwise stated in the text, the following definitions apply to these information requests:

- **Subject vehicle:** all Fifth Wheel Trailers manufactured by Forest River, Inc. since January 1, 1998 and sold or leased in the United States.
- **Alleged Defect:** cracks or fractures in the supporting structure or frame of the Fifth Wheel Trailer.
- **Forest River, Inc. ("Forest River"):** all of its past and present officers and employees, whether assigned to its principal offices or any of its field or other locations, including all of its divisions, subsidiaries (whether or not incorporated) and affiliated enterprises and all of their headquarters, regional, zone and other offices and their employees, and all agents, contractors, consultants, attorneys and law firms and other persons engaged directly or indirectly (e.g., employee to a consultant) by or under the control of Forest River (including all business units and persons previously referred to), who are or, in or after 1998 were involved in any way with any of the following related to the alleged defect in the subject vehicles:
 - a. Design, engineering, analysis, modification or production (e.g. quality control);
 - b. Testing, assessment or evaluation;
 - c. Consideration, or recognition of potential or actual defects, reporting, record-keeping and information management, (e.g., complaints, field reports, warranty information, part sales), analysis, claims, or lawsuits; or
 - d. Communication to, from, or intended for zone representatives, fleets, dealers, or other field locations, including but not limited to people who have the capacity to obtain information from dealers.
- **Other Terms:** To the extent that they are used in these information requests, the terms "claim," "consumer complaint," "dealer field report," "field report," "fire," "fleet," "good will," "make," "model," "model year," "notice," "property damage," "property damage claim," "rollover," "type," "warranty," "warranty adjustment," and "warranty claim," whether used in singular or in plural form, have the same meaning as found in 49 CFR 579.4.

In order for my staff to evaluate the alleged defect, certain information is required. Pursuant to 49 U.S.C. § 30166, please provide numbered responses to the following information requests. When documents are produced, the documents shall be produced in an identified, organized manner that corresponds with the organization of this information request letter (including all individual requests and subparts). When documents are produced and the documents would not, standing alone, be self-explanatory, the production of documents shall be supplemented and accompanied by explanation.

Please repeat the applicable request verbatim above each response.

After Forest River's response to each request, identify the source of the information and indicate the last date the information was gathered.

To the extent possible, provide the requested information in Microsoft Access 2000 electronic format. If Forest River is able to provide information in this format, contact ODI at 202-366-6961 to obtain a Data Disc containing a pre-formatted table that provides further details regarding the requested format for this submission.

POPULATION INFORMATION

1. Provide a table that lists by model, model year, and manufacturing location, the total number of Fifth Wheel Trailers that Forest River has manufactured for sale or lease in the United States since January 1, 1998.

Provide the information in table format using in Microsoft Access 2000, or a compatible format, entitled "REQUEST NUMBER ONE – VEHICLE PRODUCTION INFORMATION."

2. For the subject vehicles listed in response to Request No. 1, provide a table that identifies or describes (a) the type of vehicle and (b) the quantity of each type of vehicle manufactured by model year and grouped or separated into "logical families of vehicle frames."

Each "logical family of vehicle frames" should consist of logical groupings distinguished by significant differences in application usage or frame characteristics such as, but not limited to, frame design, frame suppliers, material composition, construction, configuration, and/or design capacity (or expected loading).

Provide the information in table format using in Microsoft Access 2000, or a compatible format, entitled "REQUEST NUMBER TWO – PRODUCTION INFORMATION GROUPED BY VEHICLE FRAME FAMILIES."

3. Describe the significant similarities and differences between each of the "logical family of vehicle frames" identified in response to Request No. 2. The comparison should include, but not be limited to a description of the application usage or frame characteristics, frame design, frame suppliers, material composition, construction, configuration, and/or design capacity (or

expected loading).

Provide the information in table format using in Microsoft Access 2000, or a compatible format, entitled "REQUEST NUMBER THREE – DESCRIPTION OF FRAME FAMILIES."

4. For each subject vehicle that Forest River has manufactured that is from the same vehicle frame family (i.e. equipped with the same or essentially similar trailer frame configuration and loading as identified in Response to Request No. 2) as installed in Fifth Wheel Trailer VIN 4X4FSEM25XC021801, identify

- (1) the vehicle's VIN;
- (2) the date of manufacture
- (3) the purchaser;
- (4) the purchaser's address;
- (5) the purchaser's phone number;
- (6) the purchaser's e-mail address, and
- (7) the date of sale.

Provide the information in table format using in Microsoft Access 2000, or a compatible format, entitled "REQUEST NUMBER FOUR – INFORMATION REGARDING VEHICLES EQUIPPED WITH FRAMES SIMILAR TO VIN SN 021801."

5. For each subject vehicle that Forest River has manufactured that is from the same vehicle frame family (i.e. equipped with the same or essentially similar trailer frame configuration as identified in Response to Request No. 2) as Fifth Wheel Trailer VIN 4X4TSAP29WA011595, identify

- (1) the vehicle's VIN;
- (2) the date of manufacture
- (3) the purchaser;
- (4) the purchaser's address;
- (5) the purchaser's phone number;
- (6) the purchaser's e-mail address, and
- (7) the date of sale.

Provide the information in table format using in Microsoft Access 2000, or a compatible format, entitled "REQUEST NUMBER FIVE – INFORMATION REGARDING VEHICLES EQUIPPED WITH FRAMES SIMILAR TO VIN SN 011595."

6. For each subject vehicle that Forest River has manufactured that is from the same vehicle frame family (i.e. equipped with the same or essentially similar trailer frame configuration as identified in Response to Request No. 2) as Fifth Wheel Trailer VIN 4X4TSMH232T101517, identify

- (1) the vehicle's VIN;
- (2) the date of manufacture
- (3) the purchaser;
- (4) the purchaser's address;
- (5) the purchaser's phone number;
- (6) the purchaser's e-mail address, and
- (7) the date of sale.

Provide the information in table format using in Microsoft Access 2000, or a compatible format, entitled "REQUEST NUMBER SIX – INFORMATION REGARDING VEHICLES EQUIPPED WITH FRAMES SIMILAR TO VIN SN 101517."

MANUFACTURER'S INVESTIGATION AND ASSESSMENT

7. Furnish Forest River's detailed opinion of the alleged defect in the subject vehicles. Include an assessment of the following:
- (a) the causal or contributing factors;
 - (b) the failure mode;
 - (c) the risk to motor vehicle safety that it poses;
 - (d) what warnings, if any, are provided the operator and other persons.
8. Describe any current or planned actions intended to explain, investigate, evaluate, and/or correct any potential field problems associated with the alleged defect in Fifth Wheel Trailers (1) VIN 4X4FSEM25XC021801, (B) VIN 4X4TSAP29WA011595, (C) VIN 4X4TSMH232T101517 and/or (2) other Forest River vehicles equipped with a the same or essentially similar frame design, frame supplier, material composition, construction, configuration and/or design load capacity equipped (as identified in Response to Request No. 2) as the frame installed in (1) VIN 4X4FSEM25XC021801, (B) VIN 4X4TSAP29WA011595, (C) VIN

COMPLAINT INFORMATION

9. State the number of each of the following, received by Forest River, or of which Forest River is otherwise aware, which relate to, or may relate to, the alleged defect in the subject vehicles:
- a) Consumer complaints, including those from fleet operators;
 - b) Field reports, including dealer field reports;
 - c) Reports involving a crash, injury, or fatality, based on claims against the manufacturer involving a death or injury, notices received by the manufacturer alleging or proving that a death or injury was caused by a possible defect in a subject vehicle, property damage claims, consumer complaints, or field reports;
 - d) Reports involving a fire, based on claims against Forest River involving a death or injury, notices received by Forest River alleging or proving that a death or injury was caused by a possible defect in a subject vehicle, property damage claims, consumer complaints, or field reports;
 - e) Property damage claims;
 - f) Third-party arbitration proceedings where Forest River is or was a party to the arbitration; and,
 - g) Lawsuits, both pending and closed, in which Forest River is or was a defendant or codefendant.

For subparts "a" through "e," state the total number of each item (e.g., consumer complaints, field reports, etc.) separately. Multiple incidents involving the same vehicle are to be counted separately. Multiple reports of the same incident are also to be counted separately (i.e., a consumer complaint and a field report involving the same incident in which a crash occurred are to be counted as a crash report, a field report and a consumer complaint).

In addition, for items "c" through "g," provide a summary description of the alleged problem and causal and contributing factors and Forest River's assessment of the problem, with a summary of the significant underlying facts and evidence.

For items "f" and "g," identify the parties to the action, as well as the caption, court, docket number, and date on which the complaint or other document initiating the action was filed.

Provide the table in Microsoft Access 2000, or a compatible format, entitled "REQUEST NUMBER NINE – COMPLAINT INFORMATION." Contact ODI at 202-366-6961 to obtain a Data Disc containing a pre-formatted table that provides further details regarding this submission.

10. Separately, for each item (complaint, report, claim, notice, or matter) identified in response to Request No. 9 above, state the following information:
- a) Forest River's file number or other identifier used;
 - b) The category of the item, as identified in Request No. 6 (i.e., consumer complaint, field report, etc.);
 - c) Vehicle owner or fleet name (and fleet contact person), address, and telephone number;
 - d) Vehicle's VIN, serial number, or other identifier;
 - e) Vehicle's make, model and model year;
 - f) Vehicle's mileage at time of incident;
 - g) Incident date;
 - h) Report or claim date;
 - i) Whether a crash is alleged;
 - j) Whether property damage is alleged;
 - k) Number of alleged injuries, if any; and
 - l) Number of alleged fatalities, if any.

WARRANTY INFORMATION

11. State, by model and model year, a total count for all of the following categories of claims, collectively, that have been paid by Forest River to date that relate to, or may relate to, the alleged defect in the subject vehicles: warranty claims; extended warranty claims; claims for good will services that were provided; field, zone, or similar adjustments and reimbursements; and warranty claims or repairs made in accordance with a procedure specified in a technical service bulletin or customer satisfaction campaign.

Separately, for each such claim, state the following information:

- a) Forest River's claim number;
- b) Vehicle owner or fleet name (and fleet contact person) and telephone number;
- c) VIN;
- d) Repair date;
- e) Vehicle mileage at time of repair;

- f) Repairing dealer's or facility's name, telephone number, city and state or ZIP code;
- g) Labor operation number;
- h) Problem code;
- i) Replacement part number(s);
- j) Concern stated by customer; and
- k) Comment, if any, by dealer/technician relating to claim and/or repair;
- l) Description of the repairs conducted.

Provide the table in Microsoft Access 2000, or a compatible format, entitled "REQUEST NUMBER ELEVEN – WARRANTY INFORMATION."

12. Describe in detail the search criteria used by Forest River to identify the claims identified in response to Request No. 11, including the labor operations, problem codes, part numbers and any other pertinent parameters used. Provide a list of all labor operations, labor operation descriptions, problem codes, and problem code descriptions applicable to the alleged defect in the subject vehicles.

Describe any extended warranty coverage option(s) related to the alleged defect that Forest River offered for the subject vehicles and state by option, model, and model year, the number of vehicles that are covered under each such extended warranty.

State whether denied warranty claims have been included in the response to Request No. 11. If Forest River did not include denied warranty claims in Response to Request No. 11, provide the warranty request information listed in Request No. 11 for each denied warranty claim.

ENGINEERING INFORMATION

4X4FSEM25XC021801 -

13. Provide a copy of an engineering drawing that depicts the frame assembly (complete frame assembly without vehicle body installed) representative of the frame installed in Forest River VIN Fifth Wheel Trailer VIN4X4FSEM25XC021801.
14. Provide a second copy of the engineering drawing furnished in response to Request No 13 that is "marked-up" to indicate the location, direction and

size of the fractures and cracks the Forest River has detected in VIN 4X4FSEM25XC021801. Where possible, indicate the initiation point and brief description of the size, location, and direction of each crack and fracture identified.

Describe the basis that Forest River used to identify the location of each crack and fracture identified above (e.g. based on Forest River's inspection of the vehicle, based on a dealer or independent service center's inspection of the vehicle, based on the photographs supplied by ODI, based on experience with similar vehicles, etc.)

4X4TSAP29WA011595 -

15. Provide a copy of an engineering drawing that depicts the frame assembly (complete frame assembly without vehicle body installed) representative of the frame installed in Forest River VIN Fifth Wheel Trailer VIN 4X4TSAP29WA011595.
16. Provide a second copy of the engineering drawing furnished in response to Request No 15 that is "marked-up" to indicate the location, direction and size of the fractures and cracks the Forest River has detected in VIN 4X4TSAP29WA011595. Where possible, indicate the initiation point and brief description of the size, location, and direction of each crack and fracture identified.

Describe the basis that Forest River used to identify the location of each crack and fracture identified above (e.g. based on Forest River's inspection of the vehicle, based on a dealer or independent service center's inspection of the vehicle, based on the photographs supplied by ODI, based on experience with similar vehicles, etc.)

4X4TSMH232T101517 -

17. Provide a copy of an engineering drawing that depicts the frame assembly (complete frame assembly without vehicle body installed) representative of the frame installed in Forest River VIN Fifth Wheel Trailer VIN 4X4TSMH232T101517.
18. Provide a second copy of the engineering drawings furnished in response to Request No 17 that are "marked-up" to indicate the location, direction and

size of the fractures and cracks the Forest River has detected in VIN 4X4TSMH232T101517. Where possible, indicate the initiation point and brief description of the size, location, and direction of each crack and fracture identified.

Describe the basis that Forest River used to identify the location of each crack and fracture identified above (e.g. based on Forest River's inspection of the vehicle, based on a dealer or independent service center's inspection of the vehicle, based on the photographs supplied by ODI, based on experience with similar vehicles, etc.)

PRODUCT CHANGES

19. Describe all modifications or changes made by, or on behalf of, Forest River in the design, manufacture, quality control, supply, or installation of the subject vehicle frame that, from the start of production to date, relate to, or may relate to, the trailer frame cracking in the subject vehicles.

For each such modification or change, provide the following information:

- a) The date or approximate date on which the modification or change was incorporated into vehicle production;
- b) A detailed description of the modification or change;
- c) The reason(s) for the modification or change;
- d) the vehicles and/or family of frames affected by each modification and/or change listed.
- e) The part numbers (service and engineering) of the original component;
- f) The part number (service and engineering) of the modified component;
- g) Whether the original unmodified component was withdrawn from production and/or sale, and if so, when;
- h) When the modified component was made available as a service component; and,
- i) Whether the modified component can be interchanged with earlier production components.

Also, provide the above information for any modification or change that Forest River is aware of which may be incorporated into vehicle production within the next 120 days.

20. Identify the supplier's name, address, phone number, and contact name for each supplier from whom Forest River has purchased frames for the vehicles listed in response to Request No. 2.

For each supplier listed, list the quantity of frames purchased by model year, by model, and part number and description (frame design, material composition, construction, configuration, and/or design capacity (or expected loading), etc.

NOTICES

21. Produce copies of all service, warranty, and other documents that relate to, or may relate to, the alleged defect in the subject vehicles, that Forest River has issued to any dealers, regional or zone offices, field offices, fleet purchasers, or other entities. This includes, but is not limited to, bulletins, advisories, informational documents, training documents, or other documents or communications, with the exception of standard shop manuals. Also include the latest draft copy of any communication that Forest River is planning to issue within the next 120 days.

This letter is being sent to Forest River pursuant to 49 U.S.C. § 30166, which authorizes NHTSA to conduct any investigation that may be necessary to enforce Chapter 301 of Title 49 and to request reports and the production of things. It constitutes a new request for information. Forest River's failure to respond promptly and fully to this letter could subject Forest River to civil penalties pursuant to 49 U.S.C. § 30165 or lead to an action for injunctive relief pursuant to 49 U.S.C. § 30163. (Other remedies and sanctions are available as well.) Please note that maximum civil penalties under 49 U.S.C. § 30165 have increased as a result of the recent enactment of the Transportation Recall Enhancement, Accountability, and Documentation (TREAD) Act, Public Law No. 106-414 (signed November 1, 2000). Section 5(a) of the TREAD Act, codified at 49 U.S.C. § 30165(b), provides for civil penalties of up to \$5,000 per day, with a maximum of \$15 million for a related series of violations, for failing or refusing to perform an act required under 49 U.S.C. § 30166. This includes failing to respond to ODI information requests.

If Forest River cannot respond to any specific request or subpart(s) thereof, please state the reason why it is unable to do so. If on the basis of attorney-client, attorney work product, or other privilege, Forest River does not submit one or more requested documents or items of information in response to this information

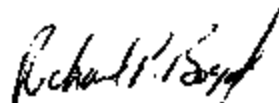
request, Forest River must provide a privilege log identifying each document or item withheld, and stating the date, subject or title, the name and position of the person(s) from, and the person(s) to whom it was sent, and the name and position of any other recipient (to include all carbon copies or blind carbon copies), the nature of that information or material, and the basis for the claim of privilege and why that privilege applies.

Forest River's response to this letter, in duplicate, together with a copy of any confidentiality request, must be submitted to this office by **March 17, 2004**. Please refer to **PE04-013** in Forest River's response to this letter. If Forest River finds that it is unable to provide all of the information requested within the time allotted, Forest River must request an extension from me at (202) 366-4933 no later than five business days before the response due date. If Forest River is unable to provide all of the information requested by the original deadline, it must submit a partial response by the original deadline with whatever information Forest River then has available, even if an extension has been granted.

If Forest River claims that any of the information or documents provided in response to this information request constitute confidential commercial material within the meaning of 5 U.S.C. § 552(b)(4), or are protected from disclosure pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 1905, Forest River must submit supporting information together with the materials that are the subject of the confidentiality request, in accordance with 49 CFR Part 512, to the Office of Chief Counsel (NCC-113), National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Room 5219, 400 Seventh Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20590. Forest River is required to submit two copies of the documents containing allegedly confidential information (except only one copy of blueprints) and one copy of the documents from which information claimed to be confidential has been deleted.

If you have any technical questions concerning this matter, please call Mr. Tom Bowman of my staff at (202) 366-6961.

Sincerely,



Richard Boyd, Chief
Medium & Heavy Duty Vehicle Division
Office of Defects Investigation

Attachment A - Copy of VOQ 10051803, relevant photographs of VIN 4X4FSEM25XC021801, and Forest River's December 31, 200 letter to ODL

Attachment B - Copy of the VOQ 10053847 and relevant photographs of VIN 4X4TSAP29WA011595





U.S. Department
of Transportation
National Highway
Traffic Safety
Administration

DOT Auto Safety Hotline
Vehicle Owner's Questionnaire
To Report Vehicle Safety Defects
1-888-DASH-2-DOT
(1-888-327-4236)
INTERNET: www.nhtsa.dot.gov/hotline

FOR AGENCY USE ONLY

Date Received

18-DEC-2003

Re

Reference No.
10051803

OWNER INFORMATION (Type or Print)

Name

Address

City

Telephone Number

E-mail Address

Do you authorize NHTSA to provide a copy of this report to the manufacturer of your vehicle? ☒ YES ☐ NO
In the absence of an authorization, NHTSA WILL NOT provide your name or address to the vehicle manufacturer.

Signature of Owner _____ Date 1 / 1 /

VEHICLE INFORMATION

17 digit Vehicle Identification Number Located at bottom of windshield on driver's side
4X4F5EM25XC021801Make
FOREST RIVERModel
FOREST RIVERModel Year
9999

Date Purchased

Dealer's Name and Telephone Number

Engine:
No. Cylinders

Fuel Type:

Original Owner
☐

Dealer's City

State

Zip Code

Transmission Type

☐ Antilock Brakes

Powertrain

☐ Cruise Control

Vehicle Component Code

211000 TRAILER HITCHES; FIFTH WHEEL ASSEMBLY

Multiple Failure: 1

FAILED COMPONENT(S)/PART(S) INFORMATION

Incident Date(s)
18-DEC-2003

Failure Mileage

Failure Speed

ADDITIONAL ITEMS TO BE COMPLETED WHEN REPORTING A TIRE FAILURE

Tire Make

Tire Model (Name or Number)

Tire Size (Example P215/65R15)

DOT No. (Example: DOTM19ABC036)

☐ Original Equipment
☐ Prior Repair

Failure Location:

Tire Component Code

Tire Failure Type

ADDITIONAL ITEMS TO BE COMPLETED WHEN REPORTING A CHILD SEAT FAILURE

Make:

Date Manufactured:

Model No./Name:

Seat Type:

Installation System:

Child Seat Component Code:

Failed Part:

APPLICABLE INCIDENT INFORMATION

(Please describe in detail the incident(s), failure(s), crash(es), and injury(ies).)

Crash

Fire

Number of Persons Injured

Number of Deaths

Reported to Police

☐ Yes ☒ No☐ Yes ☒ No

0

0

N

Narrative Description of Incident(s), Crash(es), and Injury(ies).

Please describe (1) events leading up to the failure, (2) failure and its consequences, and (3) what was done to correct the failure; i.e., parts repaired or replaced (and if old part is available).

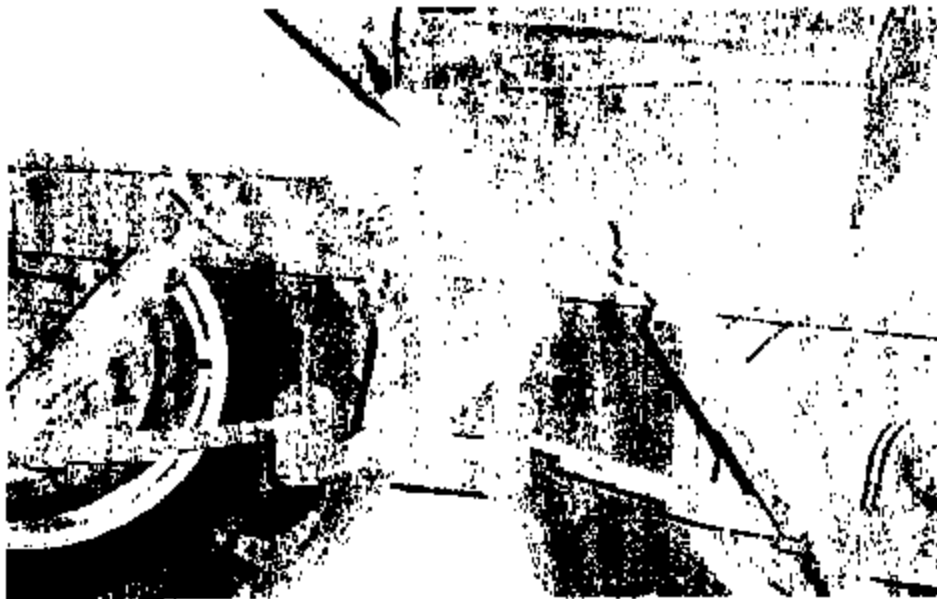
CONSUMER TOOK FIFTH WHEEL TRAILER TO DEALER FOR ROUTINE MAINTENANCE, AND MECHANIC NOTICED THE BACK PENTUM WHEEL HAD SEVENTEEN STRESS FRACTURES INSIDE OF STEEL I-BEAM. RECOMMENDED REPLACEMENT OF THE WHEEL. *AK

Include, if available: Police/Fire Department Report, Photos, and Repair Invoice.

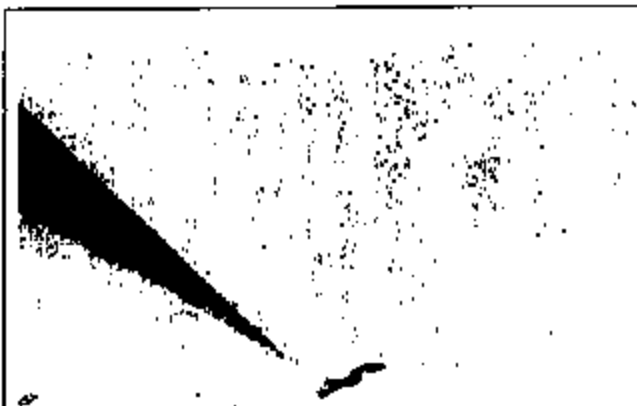
ATTACH ADDITIONAL SHEETS IF NECESSARY

The Privacy Act of 1974 (Public Law 93-579) This information is requested pursuant to authority vested in the National Highway Traffic Safety Act and subsequent amendments. You are under no obligation to respond to this questionnaire. Your response may be used to assist the NHTSA in determining whether a manufacturer should take appropriate action to correct a safety defect. If the NHTSA proceeds with administrative enforcement or litigation against a manufacturer, your response, or a statistical summary thereof, may be used in support of the agency's action.

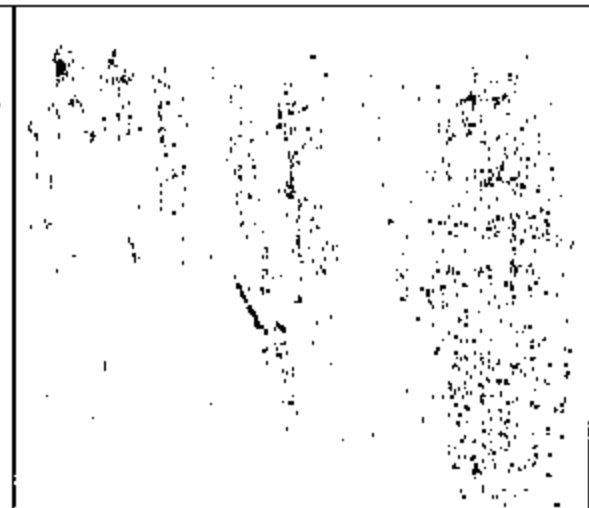
Forest River 1999 36-foot Fifth Wheel Trailer VIN 4X4FSEM25XC021801



The crack in fore-aft frame member at the base of the lateral cross member is shown on the right side of the photograph. The crack extends approximately 25 cm (12 inches) in an upwardly direction through the center of the fore-aft frame member.



View from the inside of the fore-aft frame member at the transverse frame member attachment point.



View from the outside of the fore-aft frame member.



Forest River, Inc.

3010 College Ave., P.O. Box 124, Goshen, Indiana 46527 • 574-533-5934 • Fax 574-533-6085

December 31, 2003

Mr. Tom Bowman
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

VIA FACSIMILE: 202-366-7882.

Subject: Sierra fifth wheel trailer VIN 4X4FSEM25XC021801.

Dear Mr. Bowman,

As per our conversation I am enclosing the Operations and Procedures part of our owners manual that addresses the proper loading and weight distribution.

I have a little more information on the Sierra Model F36RLSS3S fifth wheel trailer. This unit was built and shipped 11/98. An Alice Alexander purchased the unit. I understand that the present owner is a Linda Beach and I assume she is the complainant. I do not know if she is related to Ms. Alexander and is using the unit or she is a second or third owner.

I spoke to a Mr. John Knuckles from Steelco Frame Company that supplies our California plant with frames. He was the one who spoke with the technician at the dealership explaining how to repair the frame. The dealership wanted 26 hours labor to do a 2-hour repair job. Mr. Knuckles agreed to 4 hours and the dealership declined. At that point Mr. Knuckles faxed a blueprint indicating how to reinforce the frame so that it can be towed to California safely so that Steelco can repair the frame. The technician at the dealership was reluctant to agree to the reinforcement and stated that he did not feel the unit would be safe to pull.

Mr. Knuckles has been building frames for many years and I have the utmost confidence in his evaluation and conclusion of the situation in as far as what would be safe or unsafe to tow from Georgia to California. It is in his best interest that the unit is returned safely for repairs.

Mr. Knuckles has offered these repairs and modifications at no charge despite the fact that this unit is 5 years old and Ms. Beach may be a second or third owner. We have no idea what this unit has been through in the last 5 years.

Mr. Knuckles has reiterated that if the unit is reinforced in the axle area as per his blueprint it will be safe to return it to California and he will be happy to repair the cracks in the frame at no charge.

I have reviewed with our California warrant department any other frame related warranty claims for this model and found none. This is a discontinued model because of lack of interest in the floor plan by our dealer body.

On another subject, you asked me about wheel separation on towable product. I have had our warranty department at corporate run me a report on the warranty code key for the wheels. I have a list from January 1, 2001 to date of 500 or 600 incidences that we have

"The Two Forests of Forest River... Forming Relationships with Nature"

paid for warranty on a wheel R/R. Unfortunately this includes tire separation, flat tires, marred rims, wrong rims and rim fractures. It would require a person to pull each and every file on the list and note whether it was a wheel separation or not. I am personally aware of 2 units that had cracked rims. These were aluminum wheels. We investigated the situation and found that not all the wheels were cracked and the ones that were had been run on the highway for several miles with a flat tire. Then the replacement tire was mounted on the same rim and the situation was repeated. Both units were weighed at a CAT truck scale and found to be within the proper weight. The tires were Carlisle Tires ST225/75R15/D and were replaced with the same.

We purchase a wheel assembly (tire and wheel pre-mounted) by the skid load. We have dropped the Carlisle brand of tire on this size tire. We are using other tire brands and have seen a significant reduction in tire problems.

We maintain a top 10 lists of warranty/customer complaints and this list is worked on religiously to increase our customer satisfaction and reduce our warranty cost. The tire issue with the Carlisle tire ST225/75R15/D was in the top 5 for sometime. We changed brands and tire warranty/customer complaint doesn't even make the top 25.

If we can be of further service please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



William G. Conway Jr.
Forest River, Inc.
574-534-6913
Fax 574-534-5011
Email: wconway@forestriverinc.com

Cc P. Pierce
T. Miller
G. Chamberlin

Form Approved

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U.S. Department
of Transportation
National Highway
Traffic Safety
Administration

DOT Auto Safety Hotline
Vehicle Owner's Questionnaire
To Report Vehicle Safety Defects
1-888-DASH-2-DOT
(1-888-327-4236)
INTERNET: www.nhtsa.dot.gov/hotline

Date Received

12-JAN-2004

Repository ☐Reference No.
10053847

OWNER INFORMATION (Type or Print)

Name
Address
City

E-mail Address

Do you authorize NHTSA to provide a copy of this report to the manufacturer of your vehicle? ☒ YES ☐ NO
In the absence of an authorization, NHTSA WILL NOT provide your name or address to the vehicle manufacturer.

Signature of Owner _____ Date _____

VEHICLE INFORMATION

17 digit Vehicle Identification Number Located at bottom of windshield on driver's side
4X4TSAP29WA011595

Make
FOREST RIVER

Model
FOREST RIVER

Model Year
1999

Date Purchased

Dealer's Name and Telephone Number

Engine:
No. Cylinders

Fuel Type:

Original Owner
☐

Dealer's City

State

Zip Code

Transmission Type

☐ Antilock Brakes

Powertrain

☐ Cruise Control

Vehicle Component Code
162000 STRUCTURE BODY

Multiple Failure: 1

FAILED COMPONENT(S) / PART(S) INFORMATION

Incident Date(s)
12-JAN-2004

Failure Mileage

Failure Speed

ADDITIONAL ITEMS TO BE COMPLETED WHEN REPORTING A TIRE FAILURE

Tire Make

Tire Model (Name or Number)

Tire Size (Example P215/65R15)

DOT No. (Example: DOTM15ABC036)

☐ Original Equipment
☐ Prior Repair

Failure Location:

Tire Component Code

Tire Failure Type

ADDITIONAL ITEMS TO BE COMPLETED WHEN REPORTING A CHILD SEAT FAILURE

Make:

Date Manufactured:

Model No./Name:

Seat Type:

Installation System:

Child Seat Component Code:

Failed Part:

APPLICABLE INCIDENT INFORMATION

(Please describe in detail the incident(s), failure(s), crash(es), and injury(ies).)

Crash

Fire

Number of Persons Injured

Number of Deaths

Reported to Police

☐ Yes ☒ No☐ Yes ☒ No

0

0

N

Narrative Description of Incident(s), Crash(es), and Injury(ies).

Please describe (1) events leading up to the failure, (2) failure and its consequences, and (3) what was done to correct the failure; i.e., parts repaired or replaced (and if old part is available).

A FOOT LONG CRACK WAS LOCATED AROUND THE MAIN I BEAM, CAUSING THE MOTOR HOME'S LEFT SIDE TO BE LOWER THAN THE RIGHT SIDE. CONSUMER STATED THAT THE CRACK WAS A DESIGN FLAW. CONSUMER DROVE THE VEHICLE TO THE DEALER, AND MECHANIC NOTICED THE CRACKS BUT NO DEFECT WAS PRESENT AT THIS TIME. *AK

Include, if available: Police/Fire Department Report, Photos, and Repair Invoice.

ATTACH ADDITIONAL SHEETS IF NECESSARY

The Privacy Act of 1974 (Public Law 93-579) This information is requested pursuant to authority vested in the National Highway Traffic Safety Act and subsequent amendments. You are under no obligation to respond to this questionnaire. Your response may be used to assist the NHTSA in determining whether a manufacturer should take appropriate action to correct a safety defect. If the NHTSA proceeds with administrative enforcement or litigation against a manufacturer, your response, or a statistical summary thereof, may be used in support of the agency's action.

Forest River 1999 38-foot Fifth Wheel Trailer VIN 4X4TSAP29WA011595

The photographs were furnished by the vehicle owner at ODI's request and indicate that horizontal cracks have developed at four locations in the fore-aft frame members. Each of the four cracks is approximately 25 cm (12 inches) in length. The cracks are visually evident at the base of each of two transverse frame members that connect the two fore-aft frame members to each other.



**Fore-aft Frame Viewed from Outside at
Driver's Side (Left) Forward Wheel**



**Fore-aft Frame Viewed from Outside at
"Passenger Side" (Right) Front Wheel**

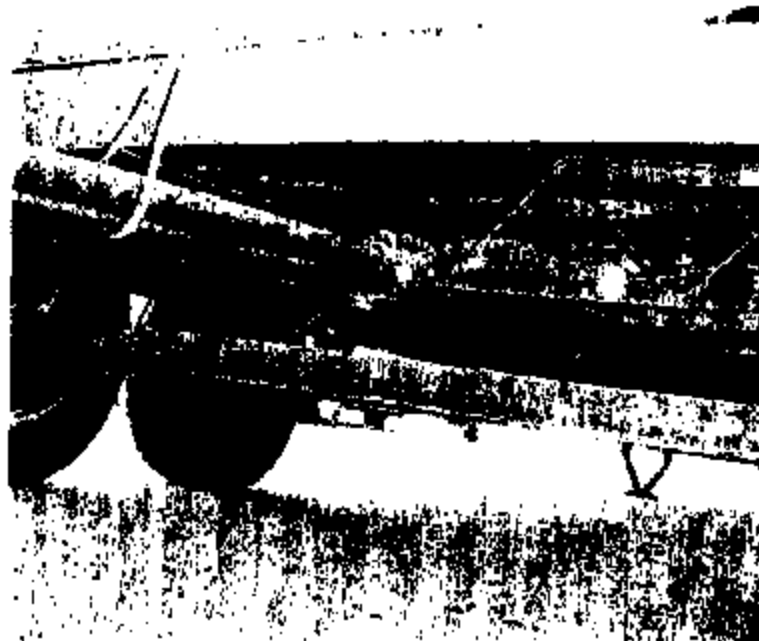


**Fore-aft Frame Viewed from Outside at
Driver's Side (Left) Rear Wheel**

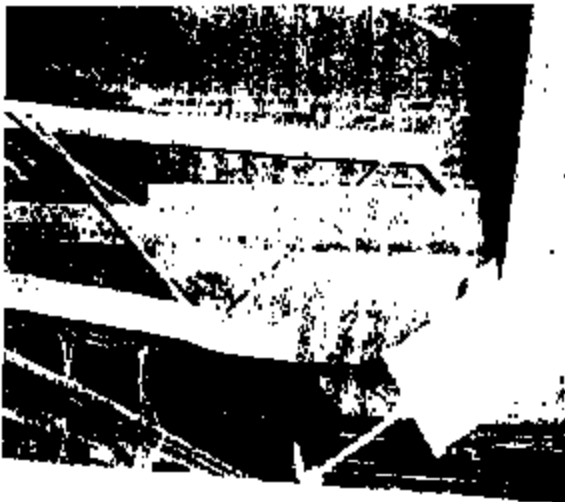


**Fore-aft Frame Viewed from Outside at
"Passenger's Side" (Right) Rear Wheel**

Forest River 1999 38-foot Fifth Wheel Trailer VIN 4X4TSAP29WA011595



Underside of Fifth Wheel Trailer VIN 4X4TSAP29WA011595 indicating that a transverse "lattice" frame member had been cut to accommodate the installation of the rearward directed (black) plastic waste water pipe.



View of underside facing forward. The plastic drainpipe is shown on the right side of the photograph. The left side of the cut lattice-work type lateral cross member is shown in mid-frame.



View of underside facing forward. The plastic drainpipe is shown on the left side of the photograph. The right side of the cut lattice-work type lateral cross member is shown in mid-frame.