



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

400 Seventh Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20580

SEP 30 2004

September 21, 2004

Mr. John Bailey
3790 NW Banff Drive
Portland, OR 97229

Re: Wheel Separation – 2003 Komfort Travel Trailer VIN 1K52KTN2132028776
NHTSA ODI Investigation - PE04-051

Dear Mr. Bailey,

Thanks you for assisting NHTSA in our investigation of wheel separations that have occurred in towable recreational vehicles.

By way of background, Komfort Corporation has provided the Office of Defects Investigation (ODI) at the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) a copy of the June 14, 2004 letter that you sent to Komfort Corporation as well as a copy of Komfort Corporation's August 10, 2004 response to you.

Based on our phone conversation, I have summarized some of the pertinent information regarding your vehicle below.

Vehicle Summary -

The vehicle was purchased in November 2002, and was towed on a trip of approx 200 miles in January 2003. In May 2003, the vehicle was towed approximately 600-700 miles into a second trip, driving in mountainous terrain, when the vehicle "felt funny" to the operator. The operator subsequently discovered that the right side rear wheel was missing. The wheel was never recovered. The owner replaced the hub and nuts in Astoria and mounted the spare tire. The damaged and broken studs were discarded.



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In September 2003, the nuts (at least two) on the right side forward wheel were found loose. Owner retorqued using a "four-way" wrench and one of the studs snapped (fractured). All of the vehicle's studs were subsequently replaced and the owner believes that he may have kept these studs.

ODI has initiated a Preliminary Evaluation (PE04-051) to investigate your complaint and related information that the Office of Defects Investigation of NHTSA has received regarding the issue of wheel separations occurring in towable recreational vehicles.

In order to assist NHTSA to better understand the issue, it would be helpful if you could provide any samples of the broken, loosened, and/or "sister" studs (those studs that had been in service, may appear to be undamaged, but were removed as part of the wheel / stud servicing).

If you are willing to provide this material for our investigation, please package the requested components, apply the enclosed address label, and mail the package at any convenient United States Post Office or U. S. mailbox. Mailing expenses will be paid by the U. S. Department of Transportation.

Thank you for your assistance. NHTSA is able to respond to prospective safety issues by learning of issues and examining the components from consumer reports such as yours.

Sincerely,



Tom Bowman

Office of Defects Investigation (ODI), Room 5319
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA)
United States Dept of Transportation (US-DOT)
400 Seventh Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590

202-366-6961



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SEP 30 2004

September 30, 2004

Mr. Edward Meeker
1325 Housel Craft
Cortland, OH 44410

Re: Wheel Separation – 2001 Keystone Model “Tailgator”
VIN 4YDF3292X11020444
Ref: VOQ 10052216, Preliminary Evaluation PE04-051

Dear Mr. Meeker,

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

The Office of Defects Investigation (ODI) under the NHTSA has received information that you provided on December 24, 2003, which described a wheel separation incident that occurred on August 23, 2003. On July 15, 2004, Mr. Tom Bowman of NHTSA discussed this incident with you by phone.

ODI has initiated a Preliminary Evaluation (PE) at Thor Industries, of which Keystone RV is a division.

ODI is requesting your permission to forward the VIN and report information that you have provided the Agency. ODI must request a written authorization from you since the Agency is required to protect the privacy and confidentiality of consumer information and will not release this information to manufacturers without written permission from the vehicle owner.

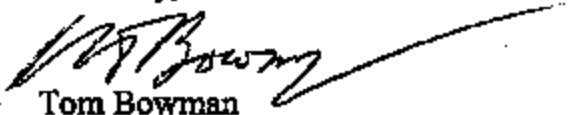


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If you concur with ODI's request to provide Keystone RV Division of Thor Industries with all of the information contained in VOQ 10052216, including the VIN and the personal contact information, please sign this letter and return it to me via fax or U.S. mail.

Concur: _____ Mr. Edward Meeker Date: _____

Sincerely,



Tom Bowman

Office of Defects Investigation (ODI), Room 5319
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA)
United States Dept of Transportation (US-DOT)
400 Seventh Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590

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Fax 202-366-7882



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Washington, D.C. 20590

SEP 23 2004

CERTIFIED MAIL

Mr. Daniel A. Bensman, Esq.
Faulkner, Garmhausen, Keister, and Shenk
Courtview Center – Suite 300
100 South Main Street
Sidney, Ohio 45365

NVS-214
PE04-051

Subject – Request for Complete Information from Keystone RV

This letter is being written in response to the information provided by Keystone RV, a division of Thor Industries, Inc., on September 1, 2004.

During Keystone RV's search for the requested information, Keystone RV advised ODI that "recent data" could be retrieved electronically whereas "earlier data" had to be retrieved manually. Keystone RV proposed to provide an initial response to ODI outlining information obtained through electronic retrieval means. ODI agreed that Keystone RV could prioritize their search efforts to information that could be retrieved electronically with the caveat that, unless the data indicated a negligible issue at Keystone RV, that this limited search effort may not satisfy the ODI request and that a manual search would then be required.

ODI's initial review of the information submitted on September 1, 2004 indicates that the wheel separation issue at Keystone RV is not negligible and that a full manual search of relevant records is indicated.

ODI is requesting that Keystone RV provides complete information to ODI by October 1, 2004. If all of the requested information is not available by October 1, 2004, Keystone RV is required to provide all information that has been retrieved at that time and advise ODI of the date by which the remaining data will be provided.



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

Sincerely,


Richard Boyd, Chief

Medium and Heavy Duty Vehicle Division
Office of Defects Investigation



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**National Highway
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400 Seventh Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590

SEP 23 2004

CERTIFIED MAIL

Mr. Daniel A. Bensman, Esq.
Faulkner, Garmhausen, Keister, and Shenk
Courtview Center – Suite 300
100 South Main Street
Sidney, Ohio 45365

NVS-214
PE04-051

**Subject -- Request for Immediate Notification of newly-reported incidents received
by Keystone RV of:**

- (1) Wheel Mounting Studs Breaking or Stripping and/or
- (2) Wheel Mounting Nuts "Missing" or Loosening, and/or
- (3) Wheel Loosening and/or Wheel Separation Events

ODI has performed a preliminary review of the information submitted by the Keystone RV Division of Thor Industries and is concerned about the number of incidents of broken or stripped wheel mounting studs, "missing," or loose wheel mounting nuts and/or wheel loosening and/or separation listed in Keystone RV's summary report.

Accordingly, ODI requests that Thor Industries (Keystone RV) notify Tom Bowman at ODI-NHTSA by e-mail at tom.bowman@nhtsa.dot.gov within 48 hours after Keystone RV learns of any incidents of broken, missing, stripped or loose wheel mounting nuts and/or wheel loosening and/or separations wheel loosening or separation occurring in any vehicle whether equipped with steel or aluminum wheels.

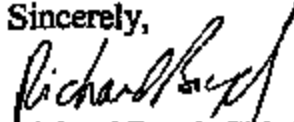
Note that this request is ongoing and includes all such reports, from all sources, whether verified or not, regardless of mileage or circumstances and does not ask Keystone RV to make any judgments or determinations that might exclude an incident from being reported for any reason.



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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard Boyd". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "R".

Richard Boyd, Chief

Medium and Heavy Duty Vehicle Division
Office of Defects Investigation