



05/18/05
2005-028
NVS-214sjm

Mr. Richard Boyd, Chief
Medium and Heavy Truck Division
Office of Defects Investigations
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
400 Seventh Street
Washington DC 20590

PE05-028
NVS-214sjm

Dear Mr. Boyd,

You will find below Blue Bird's response to your inquiry regarding battery disconnect switches on the 2005 model year Blue Bird "Vision" model school bus.

1. Provide a table that lists by model year, model, build date and manufacturing location, the total number of subject vehicles that Blue Bird has manufactured for sale or lease in the United States. Provide the table in Excel, or a compatible format, entitled, "Response to No. 1, POPULATION." Also provide the same information on any other models that utilize the same battery disconnect switch as the complaint vehicles.

Blue Bird Response: See attached Excel spreadsheet entitled "Population"

2. Identify all vehicles to which Blue Bird has performed any field repairs/retrofit procedure by repair date, make and model, date of sale, owner/fleet name, address, telephone number, contact representative, and reason for offering the retrofit. Provide a table in Excel, or a compatible format, entitled, Response No. 2, "Fleet Retrofit." Provide a detailed drawing depicting the original configuration of the seat/brackets and the revised seat brackets.

Blue Bird Response:

See attached Excel spreadsheet entitled "Fleet Retrofit"

Fleet owner name, address and telephone number along with contact name is provided below.

BLUE BIRD CORPORATION
402 Blue Bird Blvd. PO Box 937 • Fort Valley, Georgia 31030
(478) 825-2021

Newport News City Public Schools,
12098 Jefferson Avenue
Newport VA 23606
Will Dupuy
(757) 881-5052

June 02, 2005 a Blue Bird representative removed the battery disconnect switches and replaced them with junction blocks.

Distributor, at customer's request, asked for approval to remove battery disconnect switches.

3. State the total number of each, by calendar year and month and provide copies of the following, received by Blue Bird, or of which Blue Bird is otherwise aware, separated by fleets/owner, 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 stalling, 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 the alleged defect in a subject vehicle, property damage claims, consumer complaints, or field reports;
 - d. Property damage claims;
 - e. Third-party arbitration proceedings where Blue Bird is or was a party to the arbitration; and,
 - f. Lawsuits, both pending and closed, in which Blue Bird /purchaser is or was a defendant or codefendant.

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 and "d" provide a summary description of the alleged problem and causal and contributing factors and Blue Bird's assessment of the problem, with a summary of the significant underlying facts and evidence. Also for items "e and "f, 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 Excel, or a compatible format, entitled, "Response No. 3 COMPLAINT DATA."

Blue Bird's Response:

- 3 a. None
- b. None
- c. None
- d. None
- e. None
- f. None

4. Separately, for each item (complaint, report, claim, notice, or matter) within the scope of your response to Request No. 3, provide the following information:
- a. Blue Bird's file number or other identifier used;
 - b. The category of the item, as identified in Request No.3 (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 and body or serial number;
 - 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 property damage is alleged;
 - j. Number of alleged injuries, if any;
 - k. Number of alleged fatalities, if any.
 - l. Concern stated by customer;
 - m. Comment, if any, by dealer/technician relating to claim and/or repair; and
 - n. Blue Bird's assessment of the claim.

Provide this information in Excel, or a compatible format, entitled "Response to No. 4
"CLAIM DATA."

Blue Bird's Response:

- 4 a. None
- b. None.
- c. None
- d. None
- e. None
- f. None
- g. None
- h. None
- i. None
- j. None
- k. None
- l. None

- m. None
- n. None

5. State, by make, model and model year, a total count for all of the following categories of claims, collectively, that have been paid by Blue Bird 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, provide a copy of each claim.**

Also, separately, for each such claim, state the following information:

- a. Blue Bird'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 dealers or facility's name, telephone number, city and state or ZIP code;
- g. Labor operation number;
- h. Problem code;
- i. Replacement part number(s) and description(s);
- j. Concern stated by customer;
- k. Comment, if any, by dealer/technician relating to claim and/or repair; and
- l. Blue Bird's assessment of the claim, including reason for granting claim.
- m. Category, goodwill, warranty, etc.

Also, provide this information in Excel, or a compatible format, entitled "Response to No.5 CLAIM PAID DATA."

Produce copies of all documents related to each item within the scope of Request No.5. Organize the documents separately by category (i.e., consumer complaints, field reports, etc.) and describe the method Blue Bird used for organizing the documents.

Blue Bird's Response:

See attached Excel spread sheet entitled "Response to No. 5. "CLAIM PAID DATA"

Also see attached copies of claims paid for data provided in Response No. 5, "CLAIM PAID DATA" Data is not available in Excel format.

6. For each claim denied in question number 3 and 5, provide the following information:

- a. Blue Bird 's claim number and reason for the claim being denied;
- b. Vehicle owner or fleet name (and fleet contact person) and telephone number;
- c. VIN, body or serial number;
- d. Concern stated by customer;
- e. How was the bus repaired and date of repair;
- f. Vehicle mileage at time of repair;
- g. Repairing dealer's or facility's name, telephone number, city and state or ZIP code;
- h. Labor operation number;
- i. Problem code;
- j. Replacement part number(s) and description(s); and
- k. Comment, if any, by dealer/technician relating to claim and/or repair.

Provide this information in Excel, or a compatible format, entitled "Response to No.6 CLAIM DENIED DATA."

Blue Bird Response:

No claims were denied.

7. Describe in detail the search criteria used by Blue Bird to identify the claims identified in response to Request No.3 and 5, 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.

Blue Bird Response:

Blue Bird searched for all claims against the subject battery disconnect switch part number (1902337). Codes are identified on each of the claim detail sheets included in Response to No. 5, CLAIM PAID DATA.

8. Describe how Blue Bird first became aware of the alleged defect and state the date on which Blue Bird first became aware of the possibility of the alleged defect. Provide a detailed chronology of all events regarding the subject defect starting from the time Blue Bird first became aware of this issue to present. Include all information including internal meetings, meetings with switch manufacturer, other manufacturers, and fleet owners.

Blue Bird Response:

On May 12, 2005 Blue received a call from our distributor Commonwealth Bus Sales in Roanoke Va. The distributor asked if the battery disconnect switches could be removed on buses operating in the state of Virginia. The distributor

stated the customer had several battery disconnect switches to fail and wanted to remove them. A review of the state specifications indicated the battery switches were not required by state specifications and therefore could be removed. This information was relayed to Commonwealth Bus Sales.

On May 18, 2005 Blue Bird received a call from Sonny Murianka at NHTSA's Office of Defects Investigation advising of two units that had shutdown while in service reportedly due to faulty battery disconnect switches.

On May 26, 2005 Blue Bird received another call from Mr. Murianka regarding another unit at Newport News Schools that had shutdown reportedly due to a faulty battery disconnect switch.

On June 01, 2005 Blue Bird dispatched a factory service representative from our plant in Fort Valley Georgia to Newport News City Public Schools to remove the battery disconnect switches and installed junction blocks in their place. Work was completed on June 03, 2005 to the satisfaction of Newport News Schools.

9. State the new warranty coverage offered by Blue Bird regarding the electrical components system of the subject buses. Describe any extended warranty coverage option(s) related to the alleged defect that Blue Bird offered for the subject vehicles related to the alleged defect. Also, provide a copy of the electrical schematic related to the subject component illustrating the wire size and proper connection/routing and an electrical block diagram detailing the components that receive power from the wires attached to the battery disconnect switch.

Blue Bird Response:

Blue Bird has not offered any new warranty coverage related to the battery disconnect switch. A copy of the wiring diagram is enclosed.

10. Produce copies of all service bulletins, warranty, and other documents that relate to, or may relate to, the alleged defect in the subject buses, that Blue Bird has issued to any manufacturer, 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, state the date in which these documents were issued, to whom, and the date they were submitted to NHTSA in accordance with applicable regulations, such as CFR. 579.5. Also, include the latest draft copy of any communication that Blue Bird is planning to issue. Separately, identify and describe what precipitated each document.

Blue Bird Response:

None

11. Describe all assessments, analyses, tests, test results, studies, surveys, simulations, investigations, inquiries and/or evaluations (collectively, "actions") that relate to, or may relate to, the alleged defect in the subject buses that have been conducted, are being conducted, are planned, or are being planned by, or for, and including any actions conducted by switch manufacturer. For each such action, provide the following information:

- a. action title or identifier;
- b. the actual or planned start date;
- c. the actual or expected end date;
- d. brief summary of the subject and objective of the action;
- e. engineering group(s)/supplier(s) responsible for designing and for conducting the action; and,
- f. a brief summary of the findings and/or conclusions resulting from the action.

Blue Bird Response:

None

12. For each action identified, provide copies of all documents related to the action, regardless of whether the documents are in interim, draft, or final form. Organize the documents chronologically by action date.

Blue Bird Response:

None

13. Describe all modifications or changes made by Blue Bird, or on behalf of Blue Bird in the design, material composition, manufacture, quality control, supply, or installation of the subject switch/wires installed in the subject buses, from the start of the model year of the subject vehicles to present date, which relate to, or may relate to, the alleged defect in the subject buses. 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 the buses;
- b. A detailed description of the modification or change;
- c. The reason(s) for the modification or change;
- d. The part numbers (service and engineering) of the original component;
- e. The part number (service and engineering) of the modified component;
- f. Whether the original unmodified component was withdrawn from production and/or sale, and if so, when;
- g. When the modified component was made available as a service component; and,
- h. Whether the modified component can be interchanged with earlier production components.

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

Blue Bird Response:

None

14. Describe the differences and similarities between the battery disconnect switch used on the buses equipped with the standard alternator (175 amps) and the upgraded alternator (270-amps)

Blue Bird Response:

The same switch is used.

15. Furnish Blue Bird's assessment of the alleged defect in the subject vehicle including:

- a. The causal or contributory factor(s);
- b. The failure mechanism(s);
- c. The failure mode(s);
- d. The risk to motor vehicle safety that it poses; and
- e. What warnings, if any, the operator and the other persons both inside and outside the vehicle would have that the alleged defect was occurring or subject component was malfunctioning.

Blue Bird's Response:

Blue Bird has not made an assessment at this time.

16. Furnish a copy of all documents not specifically requested herein, which Blue Bird believes are relevant to, or which were used in formulating its assessment of, the alleged defect.

Blue Bird Response:

None

17. Identify what action Blue Bird intends to take on this issue.

Blue Bird Response:

The battery disconnect switches were removed from the buses at Newport News Schools. We have received no further complaints regarding the battery disconnect switches. At this time Blue Bird will continue to monitor the situation.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bill Coleman".

**Bill Coleman
Recall Administrator
Blue Bird Corporation**