APR 2 1 2006

CERTIFIED MAIL
RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED

Mr. William Coleman
Blue Bird Body Company
402 Blue Bird Blvd
P.O. 937
Fort Valley Ga. 31031

PE06-014
NVS-214sjm

Dear Mr. Coleman:

This is to advise you that the Office of Defects Investigation (ODI) has opened a Preliminary Evaluation (PE06-014) to evaluate the allegation of repeated failures of the low brake air pressure audio alarm (buzzer) on the 2005/2006 Vision model school bus. ODI has been contacted by a fleet that alleged numerous air brake buzzer failures on their buses. The buzzer alerts the driver if the air supply in the service brake reservoir should descend below 60 psi.

ODI believes that an inoperative buzzer on a school bus could pose an increased risk to the safety of the children on board, as well as motorist operating in the vicinity of the bus. Low reservoir air pressure will cause the spring brakes to apply unexpectedly and disable the school bus.

The purpose of this letter is to evaluate the nature of the problem and its consequences. Accordingly, additional information is requested.

Unless otherwise stated in the text of this letter, the following definitions apply to this information request:

- Subject Bus(s): model year 2005-2006 Vision school buses, manufactured by Blue Bird Body Company.

- Alleged defect: any failure, malfunction, or otherwise unsatisfactory performance of the low air brake air pressure audio alarm (buzzer), including all electrical wires, air hoses, brackets, and mounting hardware, and speedometer assembly that could result in an inoperative buzzer.

- Blue Bird: Blue Bird Body Company, all of its past and present officers and employees, whether assigned to its principal offices or to any of its field or other locations, including all of its divisions, subsidiaries (whether or not incorporated) and affiliated enterprises including, but not limited to, Blue Bird Body Company, 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 by or under the control of Blue Bird Body Company (including all business units and persons previously referred to) who are or were involved in any way with any of the following related to the alleged defect in the subject buses:
  a. Design, analysis, modification, or production;
  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;
  d. Communications with motor vehicle manufacturers; or
  e. Communication to or from zone representatives, fleets, dealers, or other field locations, including but not limited to people who have the capacity to obtain information from dealers.

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. Please repeat each request verbatim before the response. After the response to each request, identify the source of the information and indicate the last date the source updated the information prior to the preparation of the response. When documents are produced, the documents shall be produced in an identified, organized manner that corresponds with the Information Request letter (including the 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.

If Blue Bird Body Company cannot respond to any specific request or subpart thereof, please state the reason why it is unable to do so. If Blue Bird Body Company claims that any document or other information or material responsive to any of the following items need not be divulged to NHTSA because it is privileged or the work product of an attorney, separately, by information request number, for each document or other information or material, state the nature of that information or material and identify any document in which it is found by date, subject or title, name and position of the person from, and the person to, whom it was sent, and the name and position of any other recipient. Blue Bird Body Company must also describe any such privilege that it claims, and explain why Blue Bird Body Company believes it applies.

NHTSA requests that Blue Bird Body Company, in addition to two hard copies, also provide a copy of its response in a Microsoft Word format on a CD.

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 subject system.

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 phone number, contact representative, and reason for offering the retrofit. Provide a table in Excel, or a compatible format, entitled, Response No. 2, "Fleet Retrofit."

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 "having to stop in the middle of a school route run," 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 a possible 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."

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 and final resolution (identify by part number what component was replaced, 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."

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 and resolution (identify what component was replace including part Number), 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; and
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. *Any duplicate failure should be counted separately.*

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."

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.

8. Starting from the first claim, (or the time Blue Bird first became aware of this issue to present) provide a detailed chronology of all events regarding the subject defect. Include all information including knowledge of the first failure/claim, internal meetings, meetings with speedometer manufacturer, other manufacturers, and fleet owners. Provide in detail and 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.

9. State the new warranty coverage offered by Blue Bird regarding the speedometer head assembly 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 schematic related to the subject component and provide an exemplar of the subject speedometer assembly.

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.

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 component manufacturer. For 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.

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.

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 speedometer/alert buzzer 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.

14. Describe the differences between the original speedometer assembly used on the subject buses and the replacement speedometer assembly.

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 would have that the warning buzzer is no longer functional during an alleged defect was occurring or subject component was malfunctioning.

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.

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

This letter is being sent to Blue Bird 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. Blue Bird's failure to respond promptly and fully to this letter could subject Blue Bird 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 $16,050,000 for a related series of violations, for failing or refusing to perform an act required under 49 U.S.C. § 30166. *See* 49 CFR 578.6 (as amended by 69 Fed. Reg. 57864 (Sept. 28, 2004). This includes failing to respond to ODI information requests.

If Blue Bird cannot respond to any specific request or subpart 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, Blue Bird does not submit one or more requested documents or items of information in response to this information request, Blue Bird must provide a privilege log identifying each document or item withheld, and stating the date, subject or title, 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.

Your response to this letter, in duplicate, must be submitted to this office by May 31, 2006. Please include in your response the identification codes referenced on page one of this letter. If you find that you are unable to provide all of the information requested within the time allotted, you must request an extension from Richard Boyd at (202) 366-4933 no later than five business days before the response due date. If you are unable to provide all of the information requested by the original deadline, you must submit a partial response by the original deadline with whatever information you then have available, even if you have received an extension.

If Blue Bird 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, Blue Bird 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-30), National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Room 5219, 400 Seventh Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20590. Blue Bird is required to submit two copies of the documents containing the purportedly confidential information (accept only one copy of blueprints) and one copy of the documents from which information claimed to be confidential has been deleted.

Please contact Sonny Murianka of my staff at (202) 366-5196 upon receipt of this letter. Mr. Murianka will address any technical questions concerning this matter during the course of this investigation that you may have.

Sincerely,

Richard Boyd, Chief
Medium and Heavy Truck Division
Office of Defects Investigation