

DP09-006

Mr. Tom Bowman  
Room 48-330  
Office of Defects Investigation (ODI)  
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA)  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E.  
Washington, D.C., 20590  
202-366-2583  
[tom.bowman@nhtsa.dot.gov](mailto:tom.bowman@nhtsa.dot.gov)

OFFICE OF DEFECTS &  
INVESTIGATIONS

2010 FEB 22 P 12: 29

→ RESENT -  
ORIGINAL NOT  
ON FILE.

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Dear Mr. Bowman:

This mailing is in response to your petition request number DP09-006 regarding a large number of Blue Bird Wanderlodge Model M450 motor homes. My coach is one of the suspect units, hence my interest in providing information on my coach.

1.

Conneaut Lake, Pa.,

2. 2006 450LXI

1BBCRBG876W

3. Purchased from Parliament Coach in February 2007

4. Current mileage is 20,500

5. We purchased our coach with the intention of using it as our "winter" home, and for the purpose of extensive travel during the summer months.

Our previous coach was a 1995 forty foot Bluebird Wanderlodge which we purchased new. We made the move to our 06 because of the considerable increase in interior space and appointments, and the substantial amount of additional bay space offered by the 450LXI. We were also attracted by the significant improvement in ride and handling compared to our old coach.

6. Nearly all of the modifications relating to 07V-586 have been performed on our coach. The final work is scheduled to be done by Bluebird in April of 2010. I am told the work includes moving the generator control unit from bay three to bay two, and improving air flow to the generator while providing more access to the Webasto heating system.
7. We are able to use the coach, but do so with trepidation. We continue to have issues with the Hadley system. My service records show that we have complained about erratic leveling, air leaks, etc. from day one, and since I have very little control over the system I'm hesitant to put much trust in it. Even the slightest malfunction could rapidly cripple the coach or worse. None of the modifications attendant to the recall corrected the Hadley system, and I have never been able to find out how the Hadley was modified. Bluebird recently requested that I have the coach weighed on the way to Florida, and I made connections with Allan Barbee in Byron, Georgia on October 29, 2009. The CAT scales showed 16,460 pounds on the steer axle, 12,700 pounds on the tag axle, and 22,100 pounds on the drive axle for a gross weight of 51,260 pounds. The coach was loaded for travel. I was carrying under  $\frac{3}{4}$  tank of fuel. The black and gray tanks were empty, and I was showing around a quarter tank of fresh water. There were no passengers in the coach.

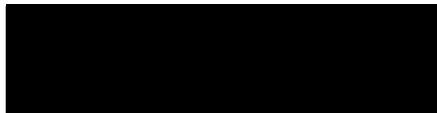
I am not at all happy that I'm running a drive axle that is illegally loaded, and am far from certain that the steer axle will legally or safely handle full fuel and the addition of passengers and driver on board. I stated earlier that one of the main reasons we purchased this coach was the dramatic improvement in ride versus our 95. I'm sorry to say, we surrendered that gain the moment we were forced to run on tires carrying 130 pounds of pressure. Anything but a glass smooth highway results in an annoyingly noisy ride and a subsequent pounding that in my opinion can only serve to shorten the life of the coach. And, moving the generator into bay three has substantially detracted from valuable bay space. Equally problematic is the fact that it is virtually impossible to access the generator or Webasto for service and repair. And, I'm concerned that the final phase modifications will infringe on what space is left in bay two which would be totally unacceptable.

8. The coach is currently in Florida, and I failed to return to Pennsylvania with my complete service file so I am not able to give you CCC, etc. at time of purchase. I plan on being back in Florida in early January, and will be able to provide information at that time. I received information from Bluebird in July of 2008 showing what modifications had been performed. It shows 50 pounds of carrying capacity in bay three, 175 pounds in bay two, 200 pounds in bay one, and 0 in the nose bay. I agreed to the bay work only after being assured I would be able to carry items I insisted on needing for travel and living. At no time did Bluebird suggest that weight could be an issue. The nose bay storage area was carpeted, weatherproofed, and provided with a cantilever door after I complained to Steve Clark about the poor quality of work done on the front of the coach. Interestingly, the sticker on the nose bay suggests that nothing can be carried there.

Additionally, Bluebird never weighed our coach prior to our recent October stop in Byron, Georgia.

9. In closing, I believe the coach should be equipped with a heavier front axle, and more substantial wheels and tires allowing owners to operate their coaches well shy of the bone shaking 130 pound figure we're currently strapped with. I would like to have assurance that the Hadley system is operating as designed, and is doing so in a safe and reliable manner. And, it is imperative that a system allowing easy access to generator/Webasto components is engineered into the repair.

Yours truly,

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the sender.