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

1200 New Jersey Avenue SE.
Washington, DC 20590

MAY 27 2010

CERTIFIED MAIL
RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED

Mr. Arturo Hernandez
Vice President of Engineering
Grote Industries, LLC
2600 Lanier Drive
Madison, Indiana 47250

NVS-214bby
PE10-013

Dear Mr. Hernandez:

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 (PE10-013) to investigate overheating, melting, and, potentially fire in Grote LED Clearance/Marker Lamps Manufactured in 2006. Failing lamps may create a situation where a vehicle fire is possible and presents a safety risk to the driver and other passengers.

This office has received one report describing three failures of the Grote LED Clearance/Marker lamps.

Review of previous recalls involving Grote LED Clearance/Marker lamps found that similar model Grote lamps to those reported to ODI had been recalled for similar failures. Recall 10V-013 described a situation where as a result of a poor environmental sealing; moisture could penetrate the lamp housing, allowing arcing to occur at the circuit board creating a carbon track. The arcing and the carbon track can cause an electrical short and the failure of the lamps. Excessive moisture in the housing that does not dissipate can lead to the failure of the lamps, including overheating, melting, and, potentially, a fire.

In order to evaluate the alleged defect, ODI is requesting specific information from Grote.

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

- **Subject Component:** All Grote LED Clearance/Marker Lamps Manufactured from 2004 through 2006.

- **Grote:** Grote Industries, LLC, 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 of a consultant) by or under the control of Grote (including all business units and persons previously referred to), who are or, in or after 1996, were involved in any way with any of the following related to the alleged defect in the subject LED Clearance/Marker Lamps:

a. Design, engineering, analysis, modification or production (e.g. quality control) of subject components;
b. Testing, assessment or evaluation of subject components;
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.

- **Alleged defect:** Smoking, melting, burning or open flame on the subject component.

- **Document:** "Document(s)" is used in the broadest sense of the word and shall mean all original written, printed, typed, recorded, or graphic matter whatsoever, however produced or reproduced, of every kind, nature, and description, and all non-identical copies of both sides thereof, including, but not limited to, papers, letters, memoranda, correspondence, communications, electronic mail (e-mail) messages (existing in hard copy and/or in electronic storage), faxes, mailgrams, telegrams, cables, telex messages, notes, annotations, working papers, drafts, minutes, records, audio and video recordings, data, databases, other information bases, summaries, charts, tables, graphics, other visual displays, photographs, statements, interviews, opinions, reports, newspaper articles, studies, analyses, evaluations, interpretations, contracts, agreements, jottings, agendas, bulletins, notices, announcements, instructions, blueprints, drawings, as-builts, changes, manuals, publications, work schedules, journals, statistical data, desk, portable and computer calendars, appointment books, diaries, travel reports, lists, tabulations, computer printouts, data processing program libraries, data processing inputs and outputs, microfilms, microfiches, statements for services, resolutions, financial statements, governmental records, business records, personnel records, work orders, pleadings, discovery in any form, affidavits, motions, responses to discovery, all transcripts, administrative filings and all mechanical, magnetic, photographic and electronic records or recordings of any kind, including any storage media associated with computers, including, but not limited to, information on hard drives, floppy disks, backup tapes, and zip drives, electronic communications, including but not limited to, the Internet and shall include any drafts or revisions pertaining to any of the foregoing, all other things similar to any of the foregoing, however denominated by Grote, any other data compilations from which information can be obtained, translated if necessary, into a usable form and any other documents. For purposes of this request, any document, which contains any note, comment, addition, deletion, insertion, annotation, or otherwise comprises a non-identical copy of another document shall be treated as a separate document subject to production. In all cases where original and any non-identical copies are not available, "document(s)"also means any identical copies of the original and all non-identical copies

thereof. Any document, record, graph, chart, film or photograph originally produced in color must be provided in color. Furnish all documents whether verified by the manufacturer or not. If a document is not in the English language, provide both the original document and an English translation of the document.

- **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. 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 Grote's response to each request, identify the source of the information and indicate the last date the information was gathered. If requested information is unavailable, so state and provide a brief explanation. Along with your written response, please provide this information in Microsoft Word 2003, or a compatible format, entitled "IR Response."

1. Provide a model/part number listing of all subject components manufactured by Grote and the production volume by month. Provide this listing by model/part number, production month, the number produced for original equipment installation per month, and the total number produced per month. Uniquely identify the lamps that were subject to recall 10V-013.

   Provide this information in Microsoft Access, Excel 2003, or a compatible electronic format, entitled "Request No. 1 Data".

2. State the number of each of the following, whether or not confirmed, received by Grote, or of which Grote is otherwise aware, which relate to, or may relate to, the alleged defect in the subject components:
   a. Consumer complaints, including those from fleet operators;
   b. Field reports, including dealer field reports;
   c. Reports involving an injury or a 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 Grote was a party to the arbitration;

f. Lawsuits, both pending and closed, in which Grote was a party;
g. Warranty claims, whether or not reimbursed, including requests for special policy adjustment, extended warranty, and/or other similar consumer considerations such as "good will" and/or any and all other reimbursement request programs; and,
h. Any other data that would indicate when a subject lamp was replaced for a cost or at no charge.

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

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

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 Microsoft Access or Excel 2003, or a compatible format, entitled "PE10-013, Request No. 2 - Complaint Information Summary".

3. Separately for each item (complaint, report, claim, notice, or matter) within the scope of your response to Request No. 2, state the following information:

a. Grote's file number or other identifier used;
b. The category of the item, as identified in Request No. 2 (i.e., consumer complaint, field report, etc.);
c. The lamp model/part number;
d. The lamp build date;
e. Incident date;
f. Incident state;
g. Report or claim date;
h. Whether a fire is alleged;
i. Whether property damage is alleged;
j. Whether or not Grote received a subrogation claim regarding the incident (Y/N);
k. Vehicle owner or fleet name (and fleet contact person), address, and telephone number;
l. Consumer comments;
m. The number of alleged injuries, if any;
n. The number of alleged fatalities, if any:
o. The vehicle 17 digit VIN the lamp/lamps were installed on;
p. The model and model year of the vehicle the lamp/lamps were installed on;
q. A brief description of the incident;
r. A brief description of the alleged relationship / contribution of the lamp's malfunction to the incident;
s. Grote's assessment of the allegation; and,

t. The current location of the damaged lamp;

Provide this information in Microsoft Access 2000, or a compatible format, entitled "Request No, 2 Data". See Enclosure 1, Data Collection Disc, for a pre-formatted table designed for this submission.

4. Describe in detail the search criteria used by Grote to identify the claims identified in response to Request No. 2, 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.

5. For each part number listed in response to Request No. 1, provide a short description that explains the major features, characteristics, and/or details that distinguishes that lamp from the other lamps listed (i.e. what characteristics / functions / features distinguish each final lamp from another lamp).

6. Produce electronic copies of all service, warranty, and other documents that relate to, or may relate to, the alleged defect in the subject component, that Grote 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 Grote is planning to issue within the next 120 days.

7. Provide a chronology and a copy of all assessments, analyses, tests, test results, studies, surveys, simulations, investigations, inquiries and/or evaluations (collectively, "actions"), including, but not limited to, pre-productions tests, that relate to, or may relate to, the alleged defect in subject components identified in response to Request No. 1 that have been conducted, are being conducted, are planned, or are being planned by, or for, Grote, its suppliers, customers, dealers, and/or its representatives or agents since Grote first became aware of the issue to the present date.

   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 planning and for conducting the action; and,
   f. A copy of the actions, assessments, analyses, tests, test results, studies, surveys, simulations, investigations, inquiries and/or evaluations and/or conclusions resulting from the action.

Provide this information in Microsoft Access 2003, Excel 2003, Word 2003 or a compatible format, entitled "PE10-013 Request No. 7 - Manufacturer's Product Investigations & Evaluations."

For each action identified, provide electronic 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.

8. Describe all modifications or changes made by, or on behalf of, Grote in the design, manufacture, quality control, supply, or installation of the subject components identified in response to Request No. 1 from the start of production to date.

   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 production;
   b. A detail 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.

   Provide the table in Microsoft Access or Excel 2003, or a compatible format, entitled "PE10-013, Request No. 8 – Product Changes". See Enclosure 1, Data Collection Disc, for a pre-formatted table designed for this submission.

9. State the number of each of the following that Grote has sold by component name, part number, month/year of sale *(including the cut-off date for sales, if applicable)*, and whether the part was sold under warranty or outside of warranty:

   a. Subject component;
   b. Any new design of the subject component intended to replace the subject component.
   c. Any kits that have been released, or developed, by Grote for use in service repairs to the subject component

   For each component part number, provide the supplier's name, address, and appropriate point of contact (name, title, and telephone number) Also identify by model and build year, any other LED Clearance/Marker Lamps of which Grote is aware that contain the same part number component, whether installed in production or in service, and state the applicable dates of production or service usage.

   Provide this information in Microsoft Access 2000, or a compatible format, entitled "Request No. 9 Data".

10. State whether Grote has ever conducted, or is aware of, any returned part analyses in subject components related to the alleged defect. If so, describe, and provide electronic copies of all documents and photographs relating to, any and all returned part analyses of subject components. Include in your description the total number of such parts returned, the number analyzed, a description of how they were analyzed, a listing of all such components that were inspected, tested, evaluated, or assessed by stating the lamp's serial number, repair date, mileage at the repair date, date of build, anomalies detected, and reason for specific component analysis. Include any and all material showing the frequencies of failed components as a function of service life.

11. Provide copies of all failure mode and effects analyses related to the alleged defect in the subject components.

12. Provide copies of all documents transmitted internally within Grote or with Thor Industries/ Eldorado National that relate to the alleged defect in the subject component. Organize the document copies in chronological order.

13. Identify all OEM and final stage manufactures who have installed the subject lamps identified in Request No. 1 as original equipment and the part number of the lamp they installed.

14. Provide the design requirements/specifications/ratings for the subject lamps identified in Request No. 1.

15. Provide the recommended installation procedure and circuit requirements for the subject lamp identified in Request No. 1.

16. Describe any markings on the subject lamps that indicate the part number and production date and describe how to interpret these markings.

17. Furnish Grote's assessment of the alleged defect in the subject component, including:

    a. An assessment of the failure mechanism including all causal or contributory factors;
    b. An assessment of the design factors of the subject component that may influence the durability of the subject component;
    c. An assessment of the manufacturing factors that may influence the durability of the subject component;
    d. An assessment of the assembly factors that may influence the durability of the subject component;
    e. An assessment of the use factors of the subject component that may influence the durability of the subject component.
    f. Please be as specific as possible in your answers and provide engineering explanations for how various factors affect the LED Clearance/Marker Lamps durability.
    g. Any warning symptoms that the lamp is failing;
    h. The root cause of the failures;
    i. Its potential effect on occupant safety; and

j. The potential for future occurrences of the alleged defect in the subject lamps;

If Grote 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, Grote does not submit one or more requested documents or items of information in response to this information request, Grote 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.

Grote's response to this letter, in duplicate, together with a copy of any confidentiality request, must be submitted to this office by **July 9, 2010**. Please refer to **PE10-013** in Grote's response to this letter. If Grote's finds that it is unable to provide all of the information requested within the time allotted, Grote's must request an extension from Mr. Richard P. Boyd at (202) 366-4933 no later than five business days before the response due date. If Grote 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 Grote then has available, even if an extension has been granted.

If Grote 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, Grote must submit supporting information together with the materials that are the subject of the confidentiality request, in accordance with 49 CFR Part 512, as amended (69 Fed. Reg. 21409 et seq; April 21, 2004), to the Office of Chief Counsel (NCC-110), National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Room W41-227, 1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E., Washington, D.C. 20590. Grote 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 me at (202) 366-6938.

Sincerely,

Bruce B. York, Acting Chief
Medium and Heavy Duty Vehicle Division
Office of Defects Investigation

Enclosure 1, one CD ROM titled Data Collection Disc containing two files