



U.S. Department
of Transportation

**National Highway
Traffic Safety
Administration**

1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

MAR -9 2012

CERTIFIED MAIL
RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED

Mr. Ken Neal
Tiffin Motorhomes, Inc.
105 2nd Street NW
P. O. Box 596
Red Bay, AL 35582

NVS-214tb
PE12-004

Dear Mr. Neal:

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 (PE12-004) to investigate two recently-received consumer complaints:

- (1) VOQ 10442861 (received on January 8, 2012) describes a brake malfunction that allegedly occurred in a MY 2007 Tiffin Allegro Bay recreational vehicle. The complaint describes a significant reduction in the brakes slowing-stopping performance while subsequently exhibiting indications that the brakes had been subjected to excessively high temperatures as evidenced by odor and brake dust deposits.

As a partial remedy for the vehicle brake malfunction, the owner had elected to have the originally-installed rear brake caliper assemblies replaced. At ODI request, these removed assemblies were shipped to VRTC and subsequently inspected. The results of these inspections were reviewed briefly during a joint phone conference conducted on February 7, 2012, with representatives from ODI, VRTC, Tiffin, Daimler Truck, and Bosch. (See Enclosure A)

- (2) VOQ 10442879 (received on January 9, 2012) describes a brake malfunction that allegedly occurred in a MY 2006 Tiffin Allegro Bay recreational vehicle. The complaint describes "hot brakes" requiring "vigorous pumping" to slow/stop the vehicle.

Later, ODI identified another owner complaint that appeared to be relevant. (This complaint is not included in the PE12-004 summary because it was identified after the

Preliminary Evaluation had been initiated.)

(3) VOQ 10442468 (received on January 5, 2012) describes a brake over-heating and rear brake “lock-up” that allegedly occurred on a 2007 Tiffin Allegro Bay vehicle.

ODI is concerned that a malfunctioning brake may result in diminished brake performance and pose a hazard to the vehicle operator, passengers, and possibly pedestrians and/or other vehicles being operated in proximity to the affected vehicle.

ODI is aware that these reports may be associated with Campaign 09V-110 conducted by Navistar in April 2009 which addressed fully-finished vehicles mounted on Workhorse Custom Chassis and equipped with Bosch disc brakes.

The above-referenced Tiffin vehicles were manufactured on a Freightliner (not Workhorse) incomplete vehicle chassis, which was equipped with Bosch hydraulically actuated wheel end brakes similar to those installed in Workhorse chassis, but these vehicles were not addressed by a related campaign action.

Note: While ODI has established the preliminary scope of this investigation as model year 2006 and 2007 Tiffin vehicles built on Freightliner Customer Chassis / Daimler Truck North America chassis and equipped with Bosch disc brakes, ODI is requesting production and complaint information for all model years of vehicles manufactured in this configuration so that the Agency is able to establish appropriate and accurate scoping as the investigation progresses.

Information Requested –

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

Subject vehicles: All model year motor homes manufactured by Tiffin Motorhomes, Inc. (“Tiffin”) equipped with the “subject components” identified below.

Subject components: Vehicle brake systems installed on chassis manufactured and sold by Daimler Trucks North America (“DTNA”), and/or designated Freightliner Custom Chassis (“FCC”), and equipped with hydraulically-actuated foundation disc brake assemblies manufactured by Robert Bosch LLC (“Bosch”).

Tiffin Industries, Inc. (“Tiffin”): 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 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 to a consultant) by or under the control of Tiffin Corporation (including all business units and persons previously referred to), who are or, in or after 2005 were involved in any way with any of the following related to the alleged defect in the subject vehicles:

- a. Design, engineering, analysis, modification or production (e.g. quality control);
- 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; or
- d. Communication to, from, or intended for zone representatives, fleets, dealers, or other field locations, including but not limited to people who have the capacity to obtain information from dealers.

Alleged defect: Diminished vehicle brake performance (slowing and stopping); typically associated with an over-heated / burnt condition or indication on one of more of the foundation brake, including ABS systems, and/or wheel end components.

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 Tiffin, 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. Pursuant to 49 U.S.C. § 30166, 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 Tiffin’s response to each request, identify the source of the information and indicate the last date the information was gathered.

To the extent possible, provide the requested information in Microsoft 2000 Access or Excel electronic format.

Production Data -

For each of the “subject vehicles” that Tiffin Motorhomes, Inc. manufactured and sold for use in North America from model year 2002 through model year 2011, provide a table that identifies:

- (a) The VIN;
- (b) The vehicle model;
- (c) The vehicle model year;
- (d) The Vehicle Gross Vehicle Weight Rating (GVWR);
- (e) The Gross Axle Weight Rating (GAWR) of the front steering axle;
- (f) The supplier of the front brake assemblies;
- (g) The diameter of the front brake actuating pistons;
- (h) The Gross Axle Weight Rating (GAWR) of the rear drive axle;
- (i) The supplier of the rear brake assemblies;
- (j) The diameter of the rear brake actuating pistons.

Provide the table in Microsoft Access 2000, Excel 2000, or a compatible format, entitled “PE12-004 - Request Number One, Total Tiffin Production, Subject Vehicles, Model Years 2002-2011.

Complaint Information -

2. State the number of each of the following, by vehicle model year and vehicle model, whether or not confirmed, received by Tiffin, or of which Tiffin is otherwise aware, which relate to, or may relate to, the alleged defect in the "subject vehicles":
- (a) Field reports, including dealer field reports;
 - (b) 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 the subject vehicles;
 - (c) Property damage claims;
 - (d) Third-party arbitration proceedings where Tiffin is, or was, a party to the arbitration; and,
 - (e) Lawsuits, both pending and closed, in which Tiffin is, or was, a party;
 - (f) 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.

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 "e," provide a summary description of the alleged problem and causal and contributing factors and Tiffin's assessment of the problem, with a summary of the significant underlying facts and evidence.

For item "e," identify the parties to the action, as well as the caption, court, docket number, and date on which the complaint or other documents initiating the action was filed.

Provide the table in Microsoft Access or Excel 2003, or a compatible format, entitled "PE12-004, Request Number Two, Complaint Summary."

3. Provide the following information for each complaint, warranty claim report, etc. identified in response to Request No. 2 above, received by Tiffin, or of which Tiffin is otherwise aware, whether or not confirmed, that alleges, or may reasonably be inferred to describe the alleged defect:
- a. Tiffin's file number or other claim identifier used;
 - b. The category of the incident as identified in response to Request No. 2 (i.e., consumer complaint, field report, etc.);
 - c. The owner's name;
 - d. The owner's address;
 - e. The owner's phone number;
 - f. The incident date;

- g. The incident location;
- h. The report or claim date;
- i. The complete vehicle 17 digit VIN;
- j. The vehicle model;
- k. The vehicle model year;
- l. Vehicle mileage at the time of the reported incident;
- m. A brief description of the incident;
- n. A summary of the information and/or returned parts that Tiffin conveyed to the supplier;
- o. A summary of the supplier's technical assessment response to Tiffin;
- p. Whether property damage is alleged;
- q. The number of alleged injuries, if any;
- r. The number of alleged fatalities, if any.

Provide the table in Microsoft Access 2000, Excel 2000 or a compatible format, entitled "PE12-004, Request Number Three, Complaint Details."

Tiffin Vendor Complaint and Field Return Processes -

- 4. Describe the procedures, processes, and/or practices that Tiffin follows regarding accepting, processing, and preserving warranty and consumer complaints regarding vehicle brake systems and vehicle brake performance.

Manufacturer's Assessment -

- 5. 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 vehicles that have been conducted, are being conducted, are planned, or are being planned by, or for, Tiffin. 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.

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.

- 6. Furnish Tiffin's detailed opinion of the alleged defect in the subject vehicles. Include an assessment of the following:

- (a) the causal or contributing factors;
- (b) the failure mode;
- (c) the risk to motor vehicle safety that it poses;
- (d) what warnings, if any, are provided to the operator and other persons.

Investigation Planning -

7. Provide a list of regional and national Tiffin owner rallies scheduled in calendar year 2012, whether sponsored by Tiffin, Tiffin Owners Groups, or other entities, that Tiffin is aware of, that are likely to be attended by a reasonable number of "subject vehicle" owners and therefore likely provide a reasonable opportunity for ODI-NHTSA and /or Tiffin to inspect vehicles and interview owners.

For each rally identified, state the location and dates of the scheduled rallies and the names and contact information of the Rally Master.

8. Produce copies of all service, warranty, and other documents that relate to, or may relate to, the alleged defect in the subject vehicles, that Tiffin has issued to any owners, 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 Tiffin is planning to issue within the next 120 days.

This letter is being sent to Tiffin 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. Tiffin's failure to respond promptly and fully to this letter could subject Tiffin 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 \$15 million for a related series of violations, for failing or refusing to perform an act required under 49 U.S.C. § 30166. This includes failing to respond to ODI information requests.

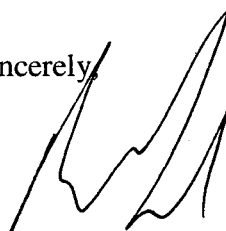
If Tiffin cannot respond to any specific request or subpart(s) thereof, please state the reason why it is unable to do so. If on the basis of attorney-client, attorney work product, or other privilege, Tiffin does not submit one or more requested documents or items of information in response to this information request, Tiffin, 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.

Tiffin's response to this letter, in duplicate, together with a copy of any confidentiality request, must be submitted to this office by **April 13, 2012**. Please refer to PE12-004 in Tiffin's response to this letter. If Tiffin finds that it is unable to provide all of the information requested within the time allotted, Tiffin must request an extension from me at (202) 366-6938 no later than five business days before the response due date. If Tiffin 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 Tiffin then has available, even if an extension has been granted.

If Tiffin 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, Tiffin 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-111), National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Room W41-227, 1200 New Jersey Ave., S.E., Washington, D.C. 20590. Tiffin 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 Mr. Tom Bowman of my staff at (202) 366-2583.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bruce York', with a stylized, sweeping flourish extending upwards and to the right.

Bruce York, Chief
Medium and Heavy Duty Vehicles Division
Office of Defects Investigation

Enclosure A
PE12-004



Summary of Phone Conference – February 7, 2012

Participants:

Tiffin: Ken Neal (*)

Daimler Trucks North America (DTNA): Nasser Zamani (*), Sean Waters;
Tony Moore

Robert Bosch: Scott Wisthuff (*)

ODI-NHTSA: Tom Bowman (*), Bruce York, Dan Hillman, Kyle Bowker,
Nate Seymour,

VRTC: Dan Pearse

(*) Designated Contact for this project.

Summary:

Reviewed recent complaint list (this list admittedly unedited), past investigation actions re Bosch brake; and preliminary findings from VRTC inspection of returned brake parts (Tiffin vehicle).

Actions / Assignments:

(1) Contact owner of complaint vehicle VOQ 10442879 (2006 Tiffin Allegro Bay) and conduct preliminary screening to assess whether this vehicle appears to be a worthwhile candidate for more detailed examination. (Bowman/ODI)

(2) Initiate PE (Bowman/ODI)

(3) Assess potential for DTNA to examine returned calipers.
(Zamani/DTNA)

(4) Prepare and distribute notes summarizing returned part inspection (rear brake components returned by owner of VOQ 10442861 (2007 Tiffin Allegro Bay).

Additional Comments / Suggestions:

(A) Bosch points out that the data gathered to-date is raw data and each report requires scrutiny to discern the specific complaint being described.