



U.S. Department
of Transportation

**National Highway
Traffic Safety
Administration**

ODI RESUME

OFFICE OF DEFECTS INVESTIGATION



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Investigation: PE 14-026
Date Opened: 08/06/2014
Investigator: Nate Seymour
Approver: Frank Borris
Subject: Swing-away boat trailer tongue failures

Date Closed: 12/23/2014
Reviewer: Bruce York-B

MANUFACTURER & PRODUCT INFORMATION

Manufacturer: TRACKER MARINE L.L.C.
Products: 2011 Track Boat Trailers
Population: 15,824

Problem Description: The swing-away trailer tongue can fail possibly resulting in a loss of control or separation from the vehicle.

FAILURE REPORT SUMMARY

	ODI	Manufacturer	Total
Complaints:	1	0	1
Crashes/Fires:	0	0	0
Injury Incidents:	0	0	0
Fatality Incidents:	0	0	0
Other*:	0	11	11

***Description of Other:** Warranty claims

ACTION / SUMMARY INFORMATION

Action: This Preliminary Evaluation is closed.

Summary:

The Office of Defects Investigation (ODI) opened this investigation based on a Vehicle Owner Questionnaire (VOQ) alleging a failure of the swing-away hitch pivot bolt resulting in a loss of control. This condition could potentially increase the risk of a crash.

During the investigation, ODI collected and reviewed subject and peer vehicle information related to the alleged defect. ODI selected model year 2010, 2012, 2013, and 2014 Tracker Marine trailers with swing-away hitches as peer vehicles. ODI sent an Information Request letter to Tracker Marine in order to collect complaint, warranty, parts sales, and design information. Tracker Marine provided all requested information and provided additional clarification upon request.

A thorough review of available data revealed no crashes, injuries, or property damage claims. ODI did identify 11 warranty claims on the subject vehicles and 9 warranty claims on peer vehicles that indicated the hitch failed in some way. Tracker Marine provided additional details about each claim. ODI determined of nine claims which indicated the hitch pin or bolt was replaced, no replacements were due to a structural failure of the pin or bolt. Most of the pins were replaced due to damage to the pull ring, which has no effect on the integrity of the hitch. Another nine claims indicated that the pin or pivot tube was cracked. This would result in excessive play and warn the driver that they needed to have the hitch repaired. The remaining 2 cases had insufficient details. All known failures were identified and repaired before a complete separation or loss of control occurred.

ODI also considered part sales for the subject component. While part sales did slightly out number warranty claims, it is impossible to correlate each sale to a particular make/model/model year trailer. The subject components are interchangeable and can be purchased in the aftermarket.

The owner who submitted the VOQ to ODI also provided the failed pivot bolt to ODI for inspection. The Vehicle Research and Test Center (VRTC) inspected the bolt and suggested that a drilling operation used to create a lubricant channel possibly contributed to the bolt failure.

The VRTC analysis indicates there is potential for improvement within Tracker Marine's production of the swing-away hitch. However, the claim rate suggests the issue is not wide spread and can be detected prior to complete failure.

This investigation is closed as further use of agency resources does not appear to be warranted. The closing of this investigation does not constitute a finding by NHTSA that no safety-related defect exists. The agency reserves the right to take further action if warranted by the circumstances.

The ODI report cited above can be reviewed at:

<http://www-odi.nhtsa.dot.gov/owners/SearchNHTSAID> under the following complaint identification numbers: 10615428