

Consumer Alert - American LaFrance Eagle Aerial-Ladder Fire Truck

On January 30th 2014 the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) opened an investigation (PE14-002) into allegations of front spindle fractures and resulting wheel separations on model year 2008 American LaFrance Eagle aerial-ladder fire trucks.

During the course of this investigation NHTSA sent American LaFrance an Information Request (IR) letter requesting information related to the alleged failures. The response to the IR letter would normally provide NHTSA with details related to complaints, warranty, population and affected operators along with other pertinent information necessary to evaluate the potential safety defect. After mailing the IR letter, NHTSA learned that American LaFrance had ceased operation and closed its manufacturing facilities. Subsequent communications with Patriarch Partners, which owns a significant equity interest in the now defunct American LaFrance, revealed that the records necessary to respond to the IR letter could not be obtained. As a result, NHTSA has not been able to complete its investigation or determine which vehicles might be at risk of a spindle failure.

NHTSA is concerned that this issue may represent a risk to motor vehicle safety – if a failure occurs, the potential for a crash and resulting injury is high. Because NHTSA is unable to obtain owner information for the subject vehicles, we are reaching out to the EMS/Fire Fighter community to alert potential operators of these vehicles of the potential hazard..

Attached is a picture of a failed part and fire truck at the scene of a failure. Please make sure you add into your regular preventive maintenance (PM) the inspection of the front spindles of these vehicles. Check for cracks along the radius of the hub as well as the spindle. It is NHTSA's belief that there may have been cracks in the spindle/hub that propagated prior to complete failure. While your American LaFrance fire truck may not have this issue, your diligence in inspecting and maintaining the spindle frequently may prevent a wheel separation while driving.

Please contact NHTSA if during your inspection you find cracks within the spindle/hub assembly or if you are aware of any other safety issue on these vehicles. If you would like additional information or you own one of these vehicles and would like to file a complaint with NHTSA, please call Peter Kivett at 202-366-6178.



