U.S. Department of Transportation

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

ODI RESUME

OFFICE OF DEFECTS INVESTIGATION

NHTSA

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Investigation: PE 15-034
Date Opened: 10/16/2015
Date Closed: 03/02/2016
Investigator: Nate Seymour
Reviewer: Bruce York-B
Approver: Otto Matheke
Subject: Hitch Failure

MANUFACTURER & PRODUCT INFORMATION

Manufacturer: BEAR TRAILER MANUFACTURING INC.
Products: 2010 Bear Trailer Manufacturing
Population: 2,338

Problem Description: The Trail Guard trailer hitch may fail increasing the risk of a vehicle crash.

FAILURE REPORT SUMMARY

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

** Total eliminates duplicates received by ODI and manufacturer.

ACTION / SUMMARY INFORMATION

Action: This Preliminary Evaluation is closed without a recall of the subject vehicle.

Summary:

The Office of Defects Investigation (ODI) opened this Preliminary Evaluation (PE) based on an owner report and the lack of required TREAD act reporting (49 CFR 579) from Bear Trailer MFG (Bear). The Vehicle Owner's Questionnaire (VOQ) reported a crack in the trailer tongue. This is a critical component for the safe operation of a trailer.

The subject component of this investigation is a patented design known as the Trail Guard tongue. This is a removable tongue which includes the electrical harness and serves two purposes. Removal of the tongue shortens the trailer, reducing the amount of storage space required and also prevents trailer theft. With the tongue and coupler removed it is impossible to connect a tow vehicle to the trailer or operate the trailer's electrical system.

ODI sent Bear an Information Request (IR) letter to gather relevant data about the subject component and vehicles. Bear responded to the letter and addressed all questions from ODI. Bear also took action addressing its failure to comply with TREAD reporting requirements.

The VOQ reported a cracked tongue. Vehicle control was maintained. The failure was discovered prior to complete separation. There were no other known failures of the subject component on 2,338 trailers with over 6 years of exposure. ODI reviewed the patent designs as submitted in 2005 and 2006. Bear did not report any design changes. The failure reported in the VOQ appears to be an isolated incident and no defect trend was detected by ODI.

Further use of agency resources does not appear warranted. This investigation is closed. The agency may take further action if new information is discovered in the future.

ODI opened this investigation to determine the scope and severity of the alleged defect.
The ODI reports cited above can be reviewed at:

http://www-odi.nhtsa.dot.gov/owners/SearchNHTSAID under the following complaint identification numbers: 10759570