U.S. Department of Transportation

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

ODI RESUME

OFFICE OF DEFECTS INVESTIGATION

NHTSA

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Investigation: PE 15-035
Date Opened: 11/16/2015 **Date Closed:** 03/02/2016
Investigator: Bruce York-B
Approver: Otto Matheke
Subject: Front Tire Overload

MANUFACTURER & PRODUCT INFORMATION

Manufacturer: Blue Bird Body Company
Products: 2005-2007 MY Blue Bird Body Model 450 LXI (Wanderlodge)
Population: 58

Problem Description: A front steer tire may fail increasing the risk of a vehicle crash.

FAILURE REPORT SUMMARY

	ODI	Manufacturer	Total
Complaints:	2	1	2**
Crashes/Fires:	3	3	3**
Injury Incidents:	0	0	0
Fatality Incidents:	0	0	0
Other*:	2	0	2

***Description of Other:** Media reports of crashes involving the subject vehicles.

** Total eliminates duplicates received by ODI and manufacturer.

ACTION / SUMMARY INFORMATION

Action: This Preliminary Evaluation (PE) is closed

Summary:

As detailed in the opening resume for this investigation dated November 16, 2015, Blue Bird Corporation (BBC) conducted recall 07V-586 with two subsequent amendments to address overloaded front axles and tires on the subject vehicles. Following the remedy installations, NHTSA received nine petitions and seven consumer complaints (many from the same owners who had filed petitions) alleging the remedial actions taken by BBC were inadequate.

At the time, NHTSA was aware of two consumer complaints and three crashes of vehicles that received the 07V-586 recall remedy. One of the complaints was similar to the petitions in that it focused on utility loss and not safety issues. The second complaint (received May 2014) described a crash that occurred in May 2013 that was also identified in media reports. The second and third crashes occurred in August 2013 and January 2015. All three crashes allegedly resulted from failure of one of the front tires.

During this investigation, NHTSA requested information from BBC including details about the three referenced crashes and if they were aware of any additional failures. BBC responded that they were not aware of any other failures and had only received crash information on one of the incidents from sources other than NHTSA.

In order to understand why the tires failed prior to or during each of the three crashes, NHTSA attempted to collect as much information about each incident as possible. This included insurance documents, photographs, police accident reports, vehicle weights, maintenance history, and the failed tires.

In the case of two of the crashes, not enough information could be obtained to determine the exact cause of the tire failure and crash. In the case of the third crash, the tire was collected and analyzed. This analysis found that the tire

failed as a result of impact damage and not overloading.

In October 2015, BBC initiated a customer service campaign (S15YF) where owners would be notified that BBC would replace the front wheels and tires on the subject vehicles. This action was taken to address owner concerns that the ride comfort in the vehicle was bad and that tire pressure was difficult to maintain at the required 130psi. The new wheels and tires installed by BBC increased the load capacity of the tire, allowing owners to carry the maximum load of the coach at a lower tire pressure.

At the time of the closing of this investigation, NHTSA does not have the necessary evidence to establish the existence of an unreasonable risk to motor vehicle safety in the subject vehicles. NHTSA is not aware of any front axle failures in the subject vehicles for any reason. The single tire failure crash where sufficient evidence had been preserved resulted from the vehicle striking an object damaging the tire.

The action taken by BBC to increase the load capacity of the tires on the subject vehicles addresses the safety concerns prompting this investigation. This investigation is closed. The closing of this investigation does not constitute a finding by NHTSA that no safety-related defect exists. The agency may take further action if warranted by the circumstances.