U.S. Department
of Transportation
**National Highway
Traffic Safety
Administration**

NOV 17 2015

1200 New Jersey Avenue SE.
Washington, DC 20590

CERTIFIED MAIL
RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED

Mr. Bruce Miles
Engineering Manager, Policy & Validation
Blue Bird Corporation
402 Blue Bird Blvd.
Fort Valley, GA 31030

NEF-140rw
PE15-035

Dear Mr. Miles:

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 (PE15-035) to investigate allegations of front tire failure in vehicles subject to recall 07V-586 manufactured by Blue Bird Corporation (Blue Bird), and to request certain information.

This office has received three reports of front tire failure in certain vehicles subject to Blue Bird recall 07V-586. One of the reports was received as a consumer complaint (ODI reference number 10594501) to the agency and two of the tire failures reports were identified in news media reports. Copies of the consumer complaint and police accident reports will be provided to you separately for your information.

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

- **Subject vehicles:** all vehicles subject to Blue Bird recall 07V-586 manufactured for sale or lease in the United States, including, but not limited to, the District of Columbia, and current U.S. territories and possessions.

- **Subject components:** all front tires, front wheels, front axles, front suspension components regardless of whether installed as original equipment or installation date.

- **Alleged defect:** all failures of subject components.

- **Remedied Vehicle(s)**: Those subject vehicles that Blue Bird Corporation has deemed to be remedied in conformance to the corrective actions outlined in recall campaign 07V-586 (as amended).

- **Blue Bird:** Blue Bird Corporation, 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 enterprises 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 of a consultant) by or under the control of Blue Bird (including all business units and persons previously referred to), who are or, in or after 2004, 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.

- **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 Blue Bird, 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 Blue Bird 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. Insofar as Blue Bird has previously provided a document to ODI, Blue Bird may produce it again or identify the document, the document submission to ODI in which it was included and the precise location in that submission where the document is located. 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 Blue Bird's response to each request, identify the source of the information and indicate the last date the information was gathered.

1. State the number of each of the following, received by Blue Bird, or of which Blue Bird is otherwise aware, which relate to, or may relate to, the alleged defect in the remedied vehicles:

   a. Consumer complaints, including those from fleet operators;
   b. Field reports, including dealer field reports;
   c. Reports involving a crash, injury or fatality;
   d. Property damage claims;
   e. Third-party arbitration proceedings where Blue Bird is or was a party to the arbitration; and
   f. Lawsuits, both pending and closed, in which Blue Bird is or was a defendant or codefendant.

   For subparts "a" through "f," state the total number of each item (e.g., consumer complaints, field reports, etc.) separately. Multiple incidents involving the same vehicle are to be counted separately. Multiple reports of the same incident are also to be counted separately (i.e., a consumer complaint and a field report involving the same incident in which a crash occurred are to be counted as a crash report, a field report and a consumer complaint).

   In addition, for items "c" through "f," provide a summary description of the alleged problem and causal and contributing factors and Blue Bird's assessment of the problem, with a

summary of the significant underlying facts and evidence. For items "e" and "f," identify the parties to the action, as well as the caption, court, docket number, and date on which the complaint or other document initiating the action was filed.

2. Separately, for each item (complaint, report, claim, notice, or matter) within the scope of your response to Request No. 2, state the following information:

   a. Blue Bird's file number or other identifier used;
   b. The category of the item, as identified in Request No. 2 (i.e., consumer complaint, field report, etc.);
   c. Vehicle owner or fleet name (and fleet contact person), street address, email address and telephone number;
   d. Vehicle's VIN;
   e. Vehicle's make, model and model year;
   f. Vehicle's mileage at time of incident;
   g. Each remedy action completed on the vehicle (related to recall 07V-586) at the time of the incident;
   h. Incident date;
   i. Report or claim date;
   j. Whether a crash is alleged;
   k. Whether property damage is alleged;
   l. Number of alleged injuries, if any; and
   m. Number of alleged fatalities, if any.

   Provide this information in Microsoft Access 2010, or a compatible format, entitled "REQUEST NUMBER TWO DATA." A pre-formatted data collection file, which provides further details regarding this submission, will be provided to you.

3. Produce copies of all documents related to each item within the scope of Request No. 2. Organize the documents separately by category (i.e., consumer complaints, field reports, etc.) and describe the method Blue Bird used for organizing the documents. Describe in detail the search methods and search criteria used by Blue Bird to identify the items in response to Request No. 2.

4. State, by model and model year, a total count for all of the following categories of claims, collectively, that have been paid by Blue Bird to date that relate to, or may relate to, the alleged defect in the remedied vehicles: warranty claims; extended warranty claims; claims for good will services that were provided; field, zone, or similar adjustments and reimbursements; and warranty claims or repairs made in accordance with a procedure specified in a technical service bulletin or customer satisfaction campaign.

   Separately, for each such claim, state the following information:

   a. Blue Bird's claim number;
   b. Vehicle owner or fleet name (and fleet contact person), street address, email address and telephone number;
   c. VIN;
   d. Incident date;

e. Repair date;
f. Each remedy action completed on the vehicle (related to recall 07V-586) at the time of the incident;
g. Vehicle mileage at time of repair;
h. Repairing dealer's or facility's name, telephone number, city and state or ZIP code;
i. Labor operation number(s);
j. Replacement part number(s) and description(s);
k. Concern stated by customer;
l. Cause as stated on the repair order;
m. Correction as stated on the repair order; and
n. Additional comments, if any, by dealer/technician relating to claim and/or repair.

Provide this information in Microsoft Access 2010, or a compatible format, entitled "WARRANTY DATA." A pre-formatted data collection file, which provides further details regarding this submission, will be provided to you.

5. Describe in detail the search methods and search criteria used by Blue Bird to identify the claims in response to Request No. 5, including the labor operations, problem codes, diagnostic trouble codes, part numbers and any other pertinent parameters used.

   Provide a list of all labor operations, labor operation descriptions, problem codes, and problem code descriptions, diagnostic trouble codes and diagnostic trouble code descriptions applicable to the alleged defect in the subject vehicles. State whether the diagnostic trouble codes are automatically reported to the warranty database electronically or manually entered into the warranty database by a claims administrator.

6. Produce copies of all service, warranty, and other documents that relate to, or may relate to, the alleged defect in the subject vehicles, that Blue Bird has issued to any dealers, regional or zone offices, field offices, fleet purchasers, or other entities since the release of recall 07V-586. 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 Blue Bird is planning to issue within the next 120 days.

7. 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 since the release of recall 07V-586, are being conducted, are planned, or are being planned by, or for, Blue Bird. 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.

8. Furnish Blue Bird's assessment of the alleged defect in the subject vehicle, including:
   a. The causal or contributory factor(s);
   b. The failure mechanism(s);
   c. The failure mode(s);
   d. The risk to motor vehicle safety that it poses;
   e. What warnings, if any, the operator and the other persons both inside and outside the vehicle would have that the alleged defect was occurring or subject component was malfunctioning; and
   f. The reports included with this inquiry.

Legal Authority for This Request

This letter is being sent to Blue Bird 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.

Civil Penalties

Blue Bird's failure to respond promptly and fully to this letter could subject Blue Bird 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.) The Vehicle Safety Act, as amended, 49 U.S.C. § 30165(a)(3), provides for civil penalties of up to $7,000 per violation per day, with a maximum of $35,000,000 for a related series of daily violations, for failing or refusing to perform an act required under 49 U.S.C. § 30166. This includes failing to respond completely, accurately, and in a timely manner to ODI information requests. The maximum civil penalty of $7,000 per violation per day is established by 49 CFR 578.6(a)(3). The maximum civil penalty of $35,000,000 for a related series of daily violations of 49 U.S.C. § 30166 is authorized by 49 U.S.C. § 30165(a)(3) as amended by § 31203(a)(1)(B) of the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act, Public Law 112-141.

If Blue Bird 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, Blue Bird does not submit one or more requested documents or items of information in response to this information request, Blue Bird must provide a privilege log identifying each document or item withheld, 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.

Confidential Business Information

All business confidential information must be submitted directly to the Office of Chief Counsel as described in the following paragraph and should not be sent to this office. In addition, do not submit any business confidential information in the body of the letter submitted to this office. Please refer to PE15-035 in Blue Bird's response to this letter and in any confidentiality request submitted to the Office of Chief Counsel.

If Blue Bird 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, Blue Bird must submit supporting information together with the materials that are the subject of the confidentiality request, in accordance with 49 CFR Part 512, as amended, to the Office of Chief Counsel (NCC-111), National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Room W41-227, 1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E., Washington, D.C. 20590. Blue Bird 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.** Please remember that the phrase "ENTIRE PAGE CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS INFORMATION" or "CONTAINS CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS INFORMATION" (as appropriate) must appear at the top of each page containing information claimed to be confidential, and the information must be clearly identified in accordance with 49 CFR 512.6. If you submit a request for confidentiality for all or part of your response to this IR, that is in an electronic format (e.g., CD-ROM), your request and associated submission must conform to the new requirements in NHTSA's Confidential Business Information Rule regarding submissions in electronic formats. *See* 49 CFR 512.6(c) (as amended by 72 Fed. Reg. 59434 (October 19, 2007)).

If you have any questions regarding submission of a request for confidential treatment, contact Otto Matheke, Senior Attorney, Office of Chief Counsel at otto.matheke@dot.gov or (202) 366-5253.

Due Date

Blue Bird's response to this letter, in duplicate, together with a copy of any confidentiality request, must be submitted to this office by **December 18, 2015**. Blue Bird's response must include all non-confidential attachments and a redacted version of all documents that contain confidential information. If Blue Bird finds that it is unable to provide all of the information requested within the time allotted, Blue Bird must request an extension from me at (202) 366-6938 no later than five business days before the response due date. If Blue Bird 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 Blue Bird then has available, even if an extension has been granted.

Please send email notification to me at bruce.york@dot.gov and to ODI_IRresponse@dot.gov when Blue Bird sends its response to this office and indicate whether there is confidential information as part of Blue Bird's response.

If you have any technical questions concerning this matter, please call me at (202) 366-6938.

Sincerely,

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