U.S. Department of Transportation

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

ODI RESUME

OFFICE OF DEFECTS INVESTIGATION
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Investigation: PE 15-023
Date Opened: 06/09/2015
Investigator: Nate Seymour **Reviewer:** Bruce York-B
Approver: Jennifer Timian
Subject: 5th Wheel malfunction

MANUFACTURER & PRODUCT INFORMATION

Manufacturer: FONTAINE FIFTH WHEEL COMPANY
Products: Fontaine Ultra LT 2011-2014
Population: 6,000 (Estimated)

Problem Description: Vehicles equipped with the Fontaine Ultra LT 5th wheel may not latch securely.

FAILURE REPORT SUMMARY

	ODI	Manufacturer	Total
Complaints:	0	TBD	TBD
Crashes/Fires:	1	TBD	TBD
Injury Incidents:	0	TBD	TBD
Number of Injuries:	0	TBD	TBD
Fatality Incidents:	1	TBD	TBD
Number of Fatalities:	2	TBD	TBD
Other*:	1	TBD	TBD

***Description of Other:** Fontaine Service Bulletin SB-10044108-5115

ACTION / SUMMARY INFORMATION

Action: A PE has been opened.

Summary:

On March 1, 2011 Fontaine Fifth Wheel issued Service Bulletin SB-10036732-7541 (ODI #10036732) describing a condition in which its Ultra LT 5th wheel could become partially closed during a trailer coupling process. The partial closing could allow a driver who only conducts a pull test during the process to believe the fifth wheel lock is properly coupled to the trailer king pin when in fact it is not.

ODI opened an investigation (PE11-012) on April 15, 2011 to better understand the false latch conditions on the Ultra LT 5th. The investigation resulted in recalls from DTNA (11V289), PACCAR (11V388), Volvo (11V460) and Mack (11V461). Fontaine did not issue an equipment recall.

On April 4, 2012, Fontaine issued a second Service Bulletin SB-10044108-5115 (ODI #10044108) describing another issue with the Ultra LT 5th wheel. In this case the operating lever in the fifth wheel could become bent (due to improper coupling techniques) to such a degree that the locking mechanism would not extend completely across the throat of the fifth wheel or seat fully behind the locking jaw. As a result of the bent operating lever condition, Fontaine stated that a trailer could disconnect from the towing vehicle. Fontaine later ceased production of the Ultra LT 5th wheel all together.

In its 2014 second quarter Early Warning Report, Fontaine reported one Death & Injury (D&I) crash. The crash resulted in two fatalities. On January 24, 2014, a semi trailer separated from a 2012 International ProStar. The trailer struck two oncoming vehicles killing both drivers.

In April 2015 Fontaine requested a meeting with ODI and on May 13, 2015 met to discuss the D&I event and a third service campaign they are considering for the Ultra LT 5th wheels.

ODI has opened this investigation to gather additional information, assess the conditions described in the two Fontaine service bulletins, and conduct testing of the Ultra LT 5th wheel.