



CORPORATE OFFICE

May 18, 2004

Associate Administrator for Safety Assurance (NSA-01)
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
400 7th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20590

04V-253
(13 pages)

Subject: Part 573 Defect and Noncompliance Report

Dear Sir:

On May 14, 2004 Featherlite, Inc. decided that a defect, which relates to motor vehicle safety, exists in the motor vehicles listed below, and is furnishing notification to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration in accordance with 49 CFR Part 573 Defect and Noncompliance Reports. The affected vehicles are manufactured by Featherlite under the "Featherlite" brand name.

Date of Report: May 18, 2004

1. The corporate name and contact of the fabricating manufacturer of the vehicle's recalled is:

Norman L. Helmke, Director of Administration
Featherlite, Inc.
P.O. Box 320
U.S. Hwy 63 & Hwy 9
Cresco, IA 52136-0320
Phone: (563)547-6000, Ext. 1008
Fax: (563)547-6099
e-mail: nhelmke@fthr.com

Further information, as required, is included in the attachments to this notification. Drafts of the notification documents are attached.

Sincerely,

Norman L. Helmke
Director of Administration

Recall of Featherlite Model 1645 & 1648 Trailers

I. Identify the Vehicle Models Involved in the Recall

2. Identify the Vehicles Involved in the Recall, for each make and model or applicable vehicle line, provide:

Make(s): "Featherlite"

Model Years Involved: 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004

Model(s): 1645, 1648

Production Dates: Beginning: April 29, 2001 **Ending:** April 25, 2004

V.I.N. Range: Beginning: 1C045671 **Ending:** 4C072181

Vehicle Type: Trailer **Body Style:** Snow Mobile Utility

Descriptive information which characterizes/distinguishes the recalled vehicles from those models not included in the recall. The trailers have "V" noses with a side unload ramp in addition to the rear loading ramp. The 10th and 11th characters contained in the V.I.N. will be "1C" for 2001 model year or "2C" for 2002 model year, 3C for 2003 model year, and 4C for 2004 model year.

II. Identifying the Recall Population

3. Number of Vehicles Potentially Involved:

<u>Model</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Number</u>
1645	2001	0
1648	2001	5
1645	2002	17
1648	2002	63
1645	2003	17
1648	2003	59
1645	2004	14
1648	2004	34

4. Total Number Potentially Affected by the Recall: 209

Estimated percentage of the total number of vehicles estimated to actually contain the defect: 90%

How was recall population determined: Upon investigation of the failure of welds on a model 1648 trailer it was determined that the trailers produced at the Cresco, Iowa plant, after the closure of another plant in Nashua, Iowa in late April 2001,

commencing with production in Cresco on April 29, 2001, and continuing with production through April 25, 2004 had axles that were being attached to the trailer with a different welding pattern and without the fasteners that had been in use at the Nashua, Iowa facility. Inspection of trailers produced by the Cresco plant during the above time frame revealed that the welding patterns used in Cresco were inadequate on a portion of the trailers that were produced during the above time frame. Approximately 90% of the trailers inspected had such welds. The problem appears to have been related to differences in the personnel conducting the welding and the lack of specific attachment procedures furnished to the welders on the line. After the April 24, 2004 report, a change in the attachment procedures was made in the Cresco plant on April 26, 2004 whereby engineering provided specific welding procedures, for these models, to welders on the line. The number of 209 trailers was determined by the actual production records for those models of trailers that were produced during that time period.

III. Describes Defect or Noncompliance

5. Describe the defect or noncompliance. The description should address the nature and physical location of the defect or noncompliance. The defect involves cracking and or breaking of certain welds that attach the axles to the frame of the trailer and failure to provide for adequate welds. Drawing numbers 287823 and 287824 are attached.

Describe cause of defect: The cause of the defect is the lack of adequate welds, both in number and location, on some of the trailers. Over time, metal fatigue can cause cracks in the welds leading to potential failure weld attachment of the trailer axles to the frame.

Describe consequence of defect condition: Failure of the axle welds while the trailer is being operated could result in the body of the trailer to become separated from the axles, which could result in a vehicle accident, which in turn, may result in property damage, personal injury or death to the operator or a third party.

Identify any warnings, which can precede or occur. Cracked welds in attachment points. No other warnings are likely.

IV. Chronology in Determining the Defect

6. Furnish a chronological summary of the principal events that were the basis for determination of the defect.

On April 9, 2004, Featherlite's warranty department received a report of an incident where a model 1648's axles had come loose while being operated. Damage was minimal and confined to the trailer and a warranty repair was made on the trailer. No prior reports of similar incidents had ever been made to Featherlite. On April 24, 2004 a second incident of axles detaching from the trailer was reported to Featherlite. Remembering that a similar incident had happened a few weeks prior, Featherlite

warranty personnel initiated an investigation to determine if these were isolated incidents or if there existed a potential safety defect that would require a safety recall. Following the investigation, it was decided on May 14, 2004 that a safety defect could possibly exist on 209 model 1645 and 1648 trailers. To date there have been no reports of injuries, property damage other than to the trailers themselves, or fatalities.

7. N/A

V. Identify the Remedy

8. Furnish description of the manufacturer's remedy for the defect. Cite differences between the recall condition and the remedy.

The repair includes an inspection of the weld pattern on the bracket which attaches the axles to the body of the trailer. If it is determined that the weld pattern, as shown in Featherlite drawing number 287823 (attached), is welded as shown in items "A", "B" or any combination of the two, then they must be welded in the pattern as shown in item "C" and in accordance with the instructions contained in Featherlite drawing number 287824 (attached). If the weld pattern is done as in item "C", no repair is required.

Clearly describe the distinguishing characteristics of the remedy component/assembly versus the recalled component/assembly.

Modified units will have a weld pattern as shown in example "C" in Featherlite drawing number 287823 (attached).

Describe how and when the recall condition was corrected in production.

The production was changed on April 26, 2004 when specific weld attachment procedures for models 1645 and 1648 were specified by engineering to the line producing those models.

VI. Identify the Recall Schedule

Initial notification to dealers. Prior to May 25, 2004.

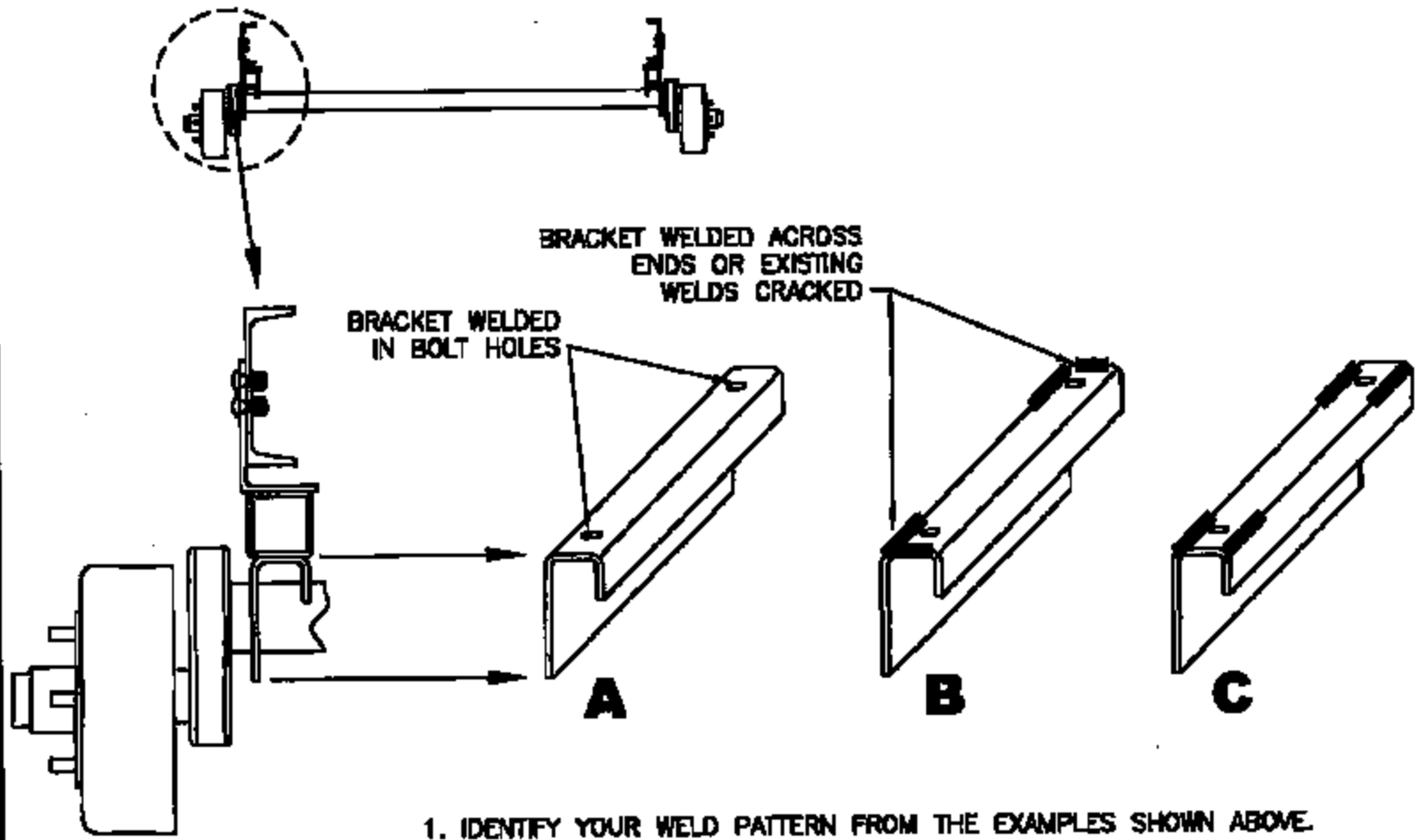
Shipment of replacement parts to dealers. N/A - No parts will be required to make the repairs.

Initial notification to retail purchasers and registered owners. Initial notification will occur on or before June 1, 2004

We see no problem in implementing this recall.

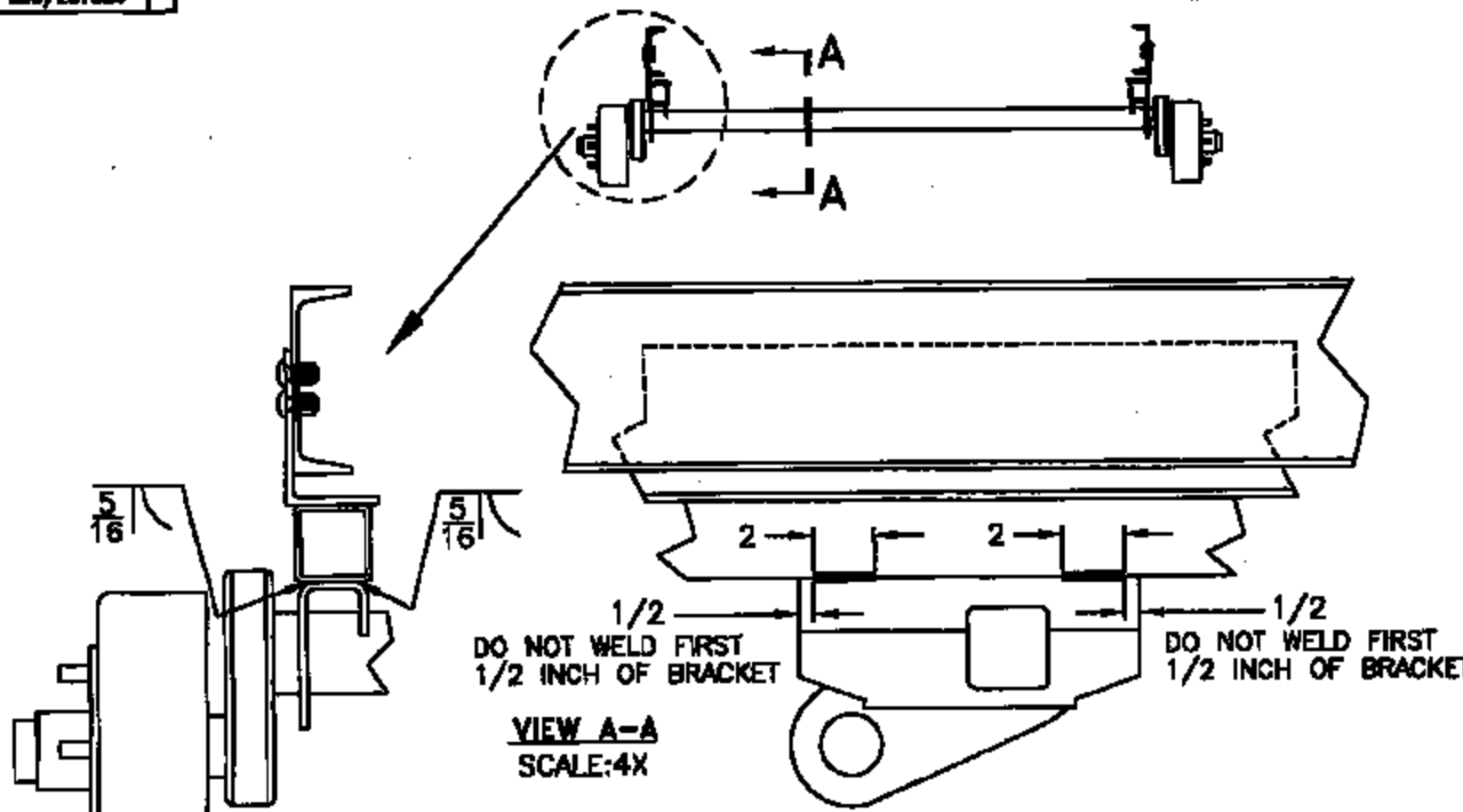
VII. Furnish Recall Communications

Drafts of the notification documents are attached.



1. IDENTIFY YOUR WELD PATTERN FROM THE EXAMPLES SHOWN ABOVE.
2. IF YOUR TRAILER IS WELDED AS SHOWN IN EITHER OF THE EXAMPLES 'A' OR 'B' ABOVE, OR ANY COMBINATION OF THE TWO, THEN FOLLOW THE REPAIR PROCEDURE ON DRAWING 287824.
3. IF YOUR TRAILER AXLE BRACKET IS WELDED AS SHOWN IN EXAMPLE 'C' ABOVE, NO REPAIR IS REQUIRED.

INSPECT



REPAIR

1. INSPECT AND IDENTIFY EXISTING WELDS PER DRAWING NUMBER 287823.
2. IF WELDS ARE NOT PLACED AS SHOWN IN EXAMPLE 'C' ON DWG 287823 ADD THE WELDS SHOWN ON THIS SHEET.
3. EACH AXLE HANGER BRACKET REQUIRES A MINIMUM OF FOUR WELDS: TWO WELDS ON EACH SIDE OF BRACKET, 2 INCHES LONG AND LOCATED AS SHOWN IN VIEW A-A ABOVE.

SCALE:4X



CORPORATE OFFICE

May 25, 2004

SAFETY RECALL NOTICE

To: All Featherlite Dealers
Subject: Safety Recall Campaign _____
Involving: Featherlite Model 1645 and 1648 Snowmobile Trailers

Featherlite, Inc., has determined that a defect, which relates to motor vehicle safety, exists in certain 2001 through 2004 Featherlite model 1645 and 1648 snowmobile trailers. This defect involves inadequate welds on the attachment of the axles to the trailer body. A failure of the axle to trailer body attachment could result in accidental damage to include personal injury, property damage or both.

Notices will be sent to all registered owners of the trailers affected. A copy of the Owner Notification Letter is attached. Dealers are required to contact owners of unregistered trailers or to provide Featherlite with Name and address information.

Important: Some of the involved trailers may still be in your inventory. Federal law requires you to complete the recall service on those trailers before retail delivery.

Inspect and repair, if necessary, any affected trailers as they are brought into your dealership. Contact Featherlite warranty department should you have any questions regarding the repair. A copy of the inspection instruction are found in Featherlite drawing number 287823 "Inspect" and the repair instructions are shown on Featherlite drawing number 287824, both enclosed with this letter.

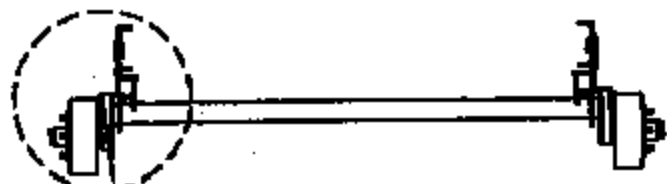
You will be reimbursed in accordance with normal Featherlite warranty procedures.

If you have questions concerning this recall, call the Featherlite warranty department at 800-800-1230 or 563-547-6000.

Your assistance in this important effort is appreciated.

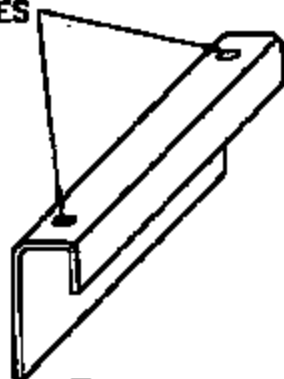
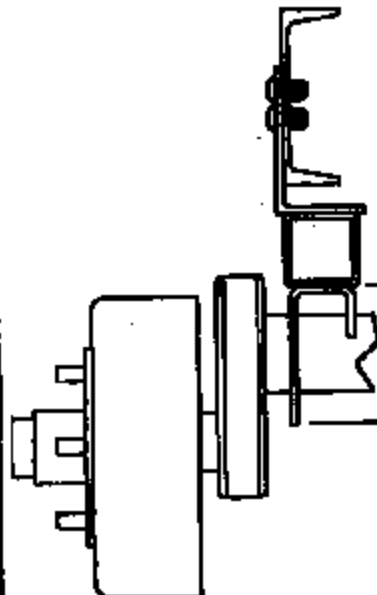
Featherlite, Inc.

Encl:

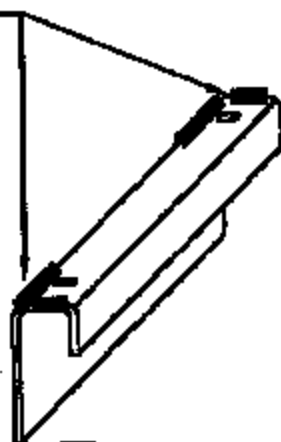


BRACKET WELDED ACROSS
ENDS OR EXISTING
WELDS CRACKED

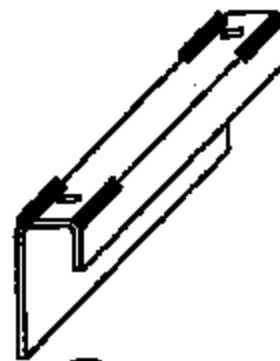
BRACKET WELDED
IN BOLT HOLES



A



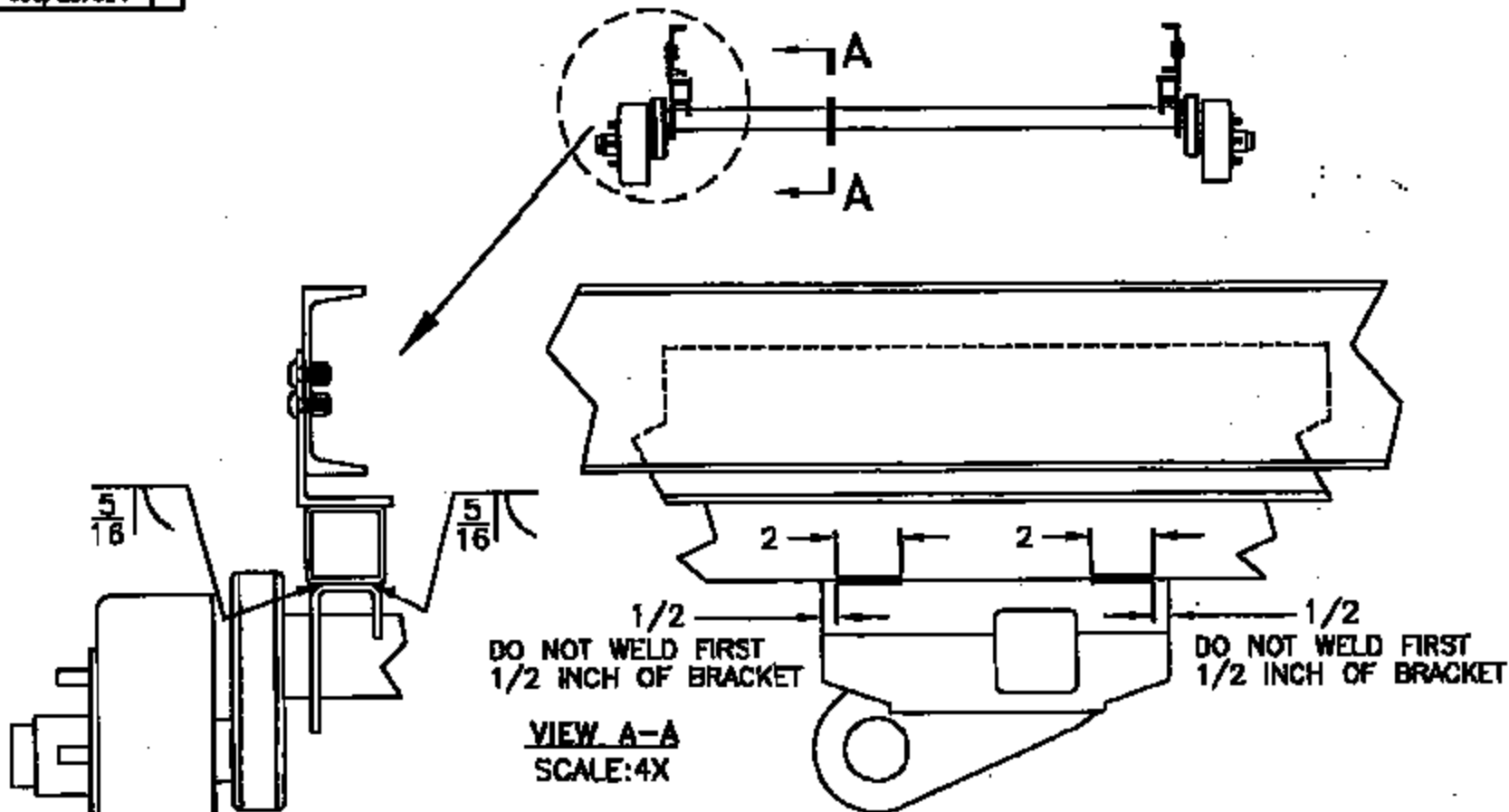
B



C

1. IDENTIFY YOUR WELD PATTERN FROM THE EXAMPLES SHOWN ABOVE.
2. IF YOUR TRAILER IS WELDED AS SHOWN IN EITHER OF THE EXAMPLES 'A' OR 'B' ABOVE, OR ANY COMBINATION OF THE TWO, THEN FOLLOW THE REPAIR PROCEDURE ON DRAWING 287824.
3. IF YOUR TRAILER AXLE BRACKET IS WELDED AS SHOWN IN EXAMPLE 'C' ABOVE, NO REPAIR IS REQUIRED.

INSPECT



SCALE:4X

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CORPORATE OFFICE

SAFETY RECALL NOTICE

June 1, 2004

Dear Featherlite Trailer Owner:

This notice is sent to you in accordance with the requirements of the National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act.

Featherlite, Inc., has decided that a defect, which relates to motor vehicle safety, exists in certain Featherlite model 1645 and 1648 snowmobile trailers. This defect involves inadequate welds that attach the axles to the body of the trailer which, over time, could lead to a failure of the attachment of the trailer body to the axles. A failure of the axle to body attachments could result in accidental damage to include personal injury, property damage or both.

Your trailer has been identified as included in this recall. Please inspect your trailer in accordance with the instructions contained on attached Featherlite drawing number 287823. If the trailer is welded as shown in examples "A" or "B" of the drawing, your trailer will need to be repaired. If you observe four (4) welds as shown in example "C" of drawing number 287823, your trailer does not require any repair and no further action will be necessary. You should also check the welds for cracks. If you determine that your trailer has any of these indices, call Featherlite warranty at 800-800-1230 immediately to report the condition so Featherlite can schedule a repair. You are advised not to load the trailer if any of the indications, listed above are observed. You may also have your dealer make the inspection for you if you are not able to inspect it yourself or if you do not wish to make the inspection. You should make arrangements with your dealer to conduct the inspection and repair or with Featherlite warranty department (toll free at (877) 903-1444) to locate a dealer or other authorized repair facility that can conduct the inspection and repair for you. The dealer or authorized welding shop should be able to make the necessary repairs at the same time as the inspection should they be required. These inspection and repairs, if necessary, will be made at no charge to you.

The inspection and repair, if required, will take about one to two hours to complete. However, additional time may be required depending on how dealer appointments are scheduled and processed. To make the appointment:

1. If you observe no failure indications but are unsure of the inspection procedures, call your Featherlite dealer directly to schedule an appointment for the inspection and repair.

June 1, 2004

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2. If you observe any of the failure indications, call Featherlite, Inc. toll free at (877)-903-1444 or on our regular phone number at 563-547-6000 for the location of your closest Featherlite dealer who can make the repair. You should call the same number if you have any problem obtaining the needed inspection or repair. Do not load or use your trailer if you observe any of the failure indications.

Take the enclosed Owner Notification Form with you at the time of your appointment and give it to your dealer or the authorized repair shop. The form identifies the vehicle and the service that is required. Please make sure that the form is filled out and returned to Featherlite.

Federal regulations requires that any vehicle lessor receiving this recall notice must forward a copy of this notice to the lessee within ten (10) days.

If you believe that Featherlite, Inc has failed or is unable to remedy the defect without charge within a reasonable time, you may submit a complaint to:


Administrator
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
400 Seventh Street SW
Washington, DC 20590

or call the toll free number:
Auto Safety Hotline at (800) 424-9393

We regret any inconvenience, which this action may cause you. This program is being carried out to ensure your safety. Featherlite will reimburse owners for pre-notification remedies if they have been made.

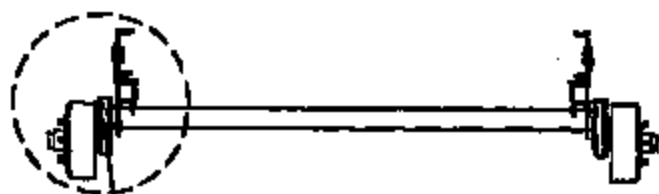
Your prompt attention to this important matter is appreciated.

Sincerely,



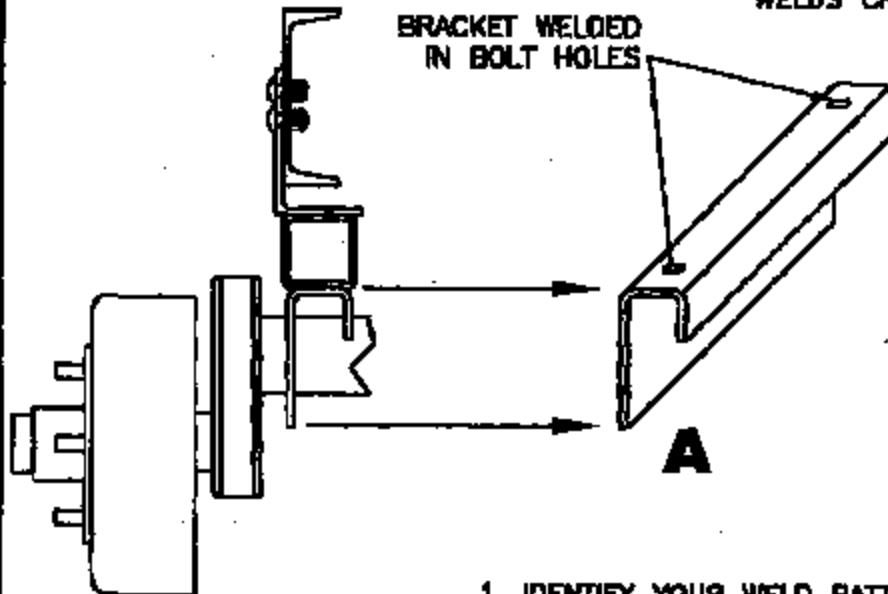
Norman L. Helmke
Director of Administration
Featherlite, Inc.

Encl:
Featherlite Drawing Number 287823 "Inspect" procedure

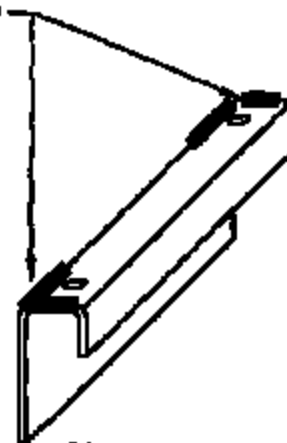


BRACKET WELDED ACROSS
ENDS OR EXISTING
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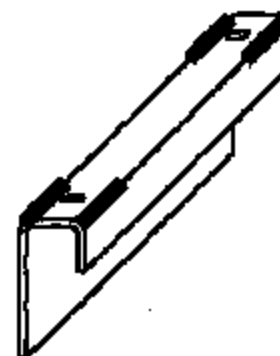
BRACKET WELDED
IN BOLT HOLES



A



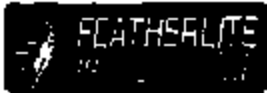
B



C

1. IDENTIFY YOUR WELD PATTERN FROM THE EXAMPLES SHOWN ABOVE.
2. IF YOUR TRAILER IS WELDED AS SHOWN IN EITHER OF THE EXAMPLES 'A' OR 'B' ABOVE, OR ANY COMBINATION OF THE TWO, THEN FOLLOW THE REPAIR PROCEDURE ON DRAWING 287824.
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INSPECT



**SNOWMOBILE TRAILER MODELS 1645 & 1648 SAFETY RECALL
CAMPAIGN - _____**

PLEASE PRINT OR TYPE CLEARLY

PLEASE PRINT OR TYPE CLEARLY

Name of Current Owner (if different than below)

Inspected - No Repair Required

Repair has been made by dealer or repair shop
(Fill in repairing facility below)

Product has been sold
(Fill in current owner information at left)

Address

Customer Signature Date

City State ZIP

Dealer or Repair Shop Making Repair (please print)

Signature of Person Performing Repair Date