



July 29, 2004

Mr. Kenneth Weinstein  
Associate Administrator for Safety Assurance  
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration  
400 Seventh Street  
Washington DC 20590

In accordance with the requirements of CFR 49 Part 573, Blue Bird Body Company is submitting the attached noncompliance report.

If you should have any questions concerning the information submitted, please contact me at 478-822-2242.

Respectfully,

Bill Coleman  
Recall Administrator

Enclosure: 573 Defect Notification Report for Recall R04HW Arvin-Meritor Air Disc Brake Recall

**BLUE BIRD CORPORATION**  
402 Blue Bird Blvd. PO Box 937 • Fort Valley, Georgia 31030  
(478) 825-2021

**PART 573 Defect and Noncompliance Reporting**

**Defect Report**

**Report Date:** July 29, 2004

**1. Vehicles affected are manufactured by:**

Blue Bird Corporation  
P. O. Box 937  
Fort Valley, GA 31030

**2. The following vehicles are being recalled:**

2003-2004 model year Blue Bird Wanderlodge M380 motor homes manufactured from September 25, 2002 through July 09, 2004, equipped with Arvin-Meritor DX 225 air disc brakes.

2004 model year Blue Bird Express 4000 Commuter Coaches manufactured from July 31, 2003 through June 25, 2004, equipped with Arvin-Meritor DX 225 air disc brakes.

2004 model year Blue Bird Express 4500 Commuter Coaches manufactured from September 20, 2003 through June 10, 2004, equipped with Arvin-Meritor DX 225 air disc brakes.

2003-2005 Ultra Low Floor transit bus manufactured from March 14, 2003 through July 02, 2004 equipped with Arvin-Meritor DX 195 air disc brakes.

**3. The total number of vehicles recalled potentially containing the defect are:**

156

**4. The approximate percentage of the total number of vehicles estimated to actually contain the defect is:**

Unknown at this time.

**5. The defect consist of:**

The defect is not known at this time. The predominant symptom reported is excessive smoke in the wheel area due to overheating of the air disc brake pads in the Arvin-Meritor supplied brake assemblies.

**6. The following data is the basis for the determination of the defect.**

On February 17, 2004, Blue Bird customer service received the first customer report of overheating/smoking brake pads on the right side of the tag axle.

Approximately one week later, Arvin-Meritor sent representatives to inspect brake assemblies at customers' location at El Centro, California. Arvin-Meritor followed up approximately one week after their visit with a verbal response indicating that foam from the undercoating process was contaminating the brake assemblies contributing to the condition.

Blue Bird reviewed its manufacturing process and did not find evidence to support Arvin-Meritor's conclusion.

On March 26, 2004, Blue Bird customer service received a second customer report of smoking/overheated brake pads on the right side of the tag axle. The brake pads were removed and held for return to Arvin-Meritor for evaluation.

In April 2004, Blue Bird customer service received two additional complaints of tag axle brake pads overheating/smoking. These brake pads were also removed and held for return to Arvin-Meritor for evaluation.

This initiated discussions between Blue Bird and Arvin-Meritor regarding the root causes of this condition. Arvin-Meritor began conducting dynamometer tests on its design.

On May 02, 2004, Arvin-Meritor responded indicating that a plastic tie strap that secured the ABS harness had come loose and contributed to the heat build up during brake operation.

Blue Bird reviewed its manufacturing process and did not find evidence to support Arvin-Meritor's conclusion.

On May 18, 2004, Blue Bird forwarded returned brake pads to Arvin-Meritor for further analysis.

In June 2004, four additional reports were received. The brake pads were once again removed and returned to Arvin-Meritor for evaluation.

Arvin-Meritor advised that its brake pad compound contains resins and rubber ingredients that have a tendency to smoke at certain elevated temperatures. This material is proprietary to Arvin-Meritor. They selected a new brake pad material supplied by Federal Mogul, which shows virtually no tendency to smoke. It also has higher tolerance to elevated temperatures.

Between July 7 and July 20, 2004, additional reports of drive and tag axle overheating/smoking were received.

On July 13, 2004 Arvin-Meritor sent its Quality and Engineering personnel to the Blue Bird manufacturing facility to perform axle inspections.

On July 19, 2004 Arvin-Meritor performed, at the Blue Bird manufacturing facility, containment actions to verify proper brake set-ups and installation on all units still in production. Any brake assemblies requiring updating were upgraded to current specifications.

On July 26, 2004, Blue Bird determined that a defect related to motor vehicle safety exists in the subject population.

**7. The defect will be corrected in the following manner:**

As an interim measure, a preliminary field campaign (performed by Arvin-Meritor personnel) is being initiated to inspect the brake assemblies to ensure proper set-up and operation. Once data from this field action is compiled and the cause of the defect determined, any additional corrective action needed will be implemented as a final remedy. The vehicles affected are new coaches covered under Blue Bird's standard warranty. However, Arvin Meritor personnel will be performing all of the inspections and modifications therefore customer reimbursement will not be necessary under this campaign.

**8. Notification will be as follows:**

Distributor notification to be determined, but no later than August 24, 2004  
Owner notification to be determined, but no later than August 24, 2004  
Parts, if required, are anticipated to be available at time of notification.

**9. Blue Bird's identification number assigned to this recall is:**

R04HW

**10. A draft copy of the notification documents will be submitted to NHTSA for review prior to mailing.**

**Questions regarding this recall should be directed to:**

William P. Coleman  
Recall Administrator  
Blue Bird Body Company  
P.O. Box 937  
Fort Valley GA 31030  
(478) 822-2242

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

*William P. Coleman*  
William P. Coleman, Recall Administrator