



BLUE BIRD

FAX

Date: 08-27-04

To: Kelly Schuler
NHTSA
202-366-7882

From: Bill Coleman
Recall Administrator
Blue Bird Body Company
478-822-2242 PHONE
478-822-2467 FAX

Number of pages including cover: 6

If you do not receive the entire transmission, please call the above referenced number.

COMMENTS:

You will find enclosed the required 573 Defect Notification Report for our Recall R04JB Sure-Lok, Inc. Wheelchair Securement Systems retractor recall.

The originals are being mailed certified mail to Mr. Weinstein today.

If you have any questions, give me a call.

Thanks,

Bill Coleman

Bill Coleman
Corporate Recall Administrator
Blue Bird Body Company



August 27, 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 defect report regarding Sure-Lok Wheelchair Securement Retractors delivered with Blue Bird buses.

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

Respectfully,

Bill Coleman
Recall Administrator

Enclosure: Part 573 Defect Report
Copy of Sure-Lok, Inc. Defect Report

PART 573 Defect and Noncompliance Reporting

Defect Report

Report Date: August 27, 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:

2004-2005 model year Blue Bird All American school buses equipped with Sure-Lok Wheelchair Securement system with retractors manufactured from February 12, 2004 through May 05, 2004.

2001-2003 model year Blue Bird TC/2000 school buses equipped with Sure-Lok Wheelchair Securement system with retractors manufactured from June 13, 2001 through December 02, 2002

2002-2004 model year Blue Bird Micro Bird school buses equipped with Sure-Lok Wheelchair Securement system with retractors manufactured from May 02, 2002 through July 27, 2004.

2004-2005 model year Blue Bird "Vision" conventional model school buses equipped with Sure-Lok Wheelchair Securement system with retractors manufactured from September 11, 2003 through March 17, 2004.

2001-2004 model year Blue Bird Conventional model school buses equipped with Sure-Lok Wheelchair Securement system with retractors manufactured from March 28, 2001 through August 13, 2004.

1999-2004 model year Blue Bird Commercial Series model non-school buses equipped with Sure-Lok Wheelchair Securement system with retractors manufactured from February 17, 1999 through June 29, 2004.

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

372

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

Unknown

5. The defect consist of:

Reference the attached Sure-Loc, Inc. 573 notification dated August 04, 2004.

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

On August 24, 2004 Blue Bird received a recall notification from Sure-Loc, Inc.
Reference the attached Sure-Loc, Inc. notification dated August 16, 2004.

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

Reference the attached Sure-Loc, Inc. notification dated August 16, 2004.

8. Notification will be as follows:

Distributor notification to be determined, but no later than September 27, 2004
Owner notification to be determined, but no later than September 30, 2004
Sure-Lok, Inc. advises that parts, if required, will be available at time of notification.

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

R04JB

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

SURE-LOK

Safe and Secure

August 4, 2004

VIA FAX 202-366-7882, 8 pages total
ATTENTION MR. CHARGE PERSON

VIA FEDEX to Mr. Weinstein:
Mr. Kenneth N. Weinstein
Associate Administrator for Enforcement
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
400 Seventh Street SW
Washington, DC 20590

Subject: Notification Pursuant to 49 CFR Part 573 of Defective Retractors

Dear Mr. Weinstein:

The following information is submitted in accordance with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's reporting regulations, 49 CFR Section 573.6. Sure-Lok, Inc. has determined that some of its wheelchair securement retractor assemblies have sprocket teeth in the retractor assembly (part number 8623-13) that are out of alignment. These retractor assemblies are part of a system used to secure wheelchairs in vehicles.

Approximately 300,000 retractor assemblies have been sold. We believe that less than one percent of the retractor assemblies have the defect in question.

In those cases where there is a problem, the sprocket teeth of the retractor assembly are out of line causing the load pawl not to fully seat in the sprocket teeth. Each retractor assembly has a load pawl that engages in two sprockets (one on each side). As the retractor strap is wound into the case, the load pawl ratchets or clicks into the teeth of the sprocket. On units that have the proper alignment (phasing) of the sprockets, the load pawl clicks into and seats on both sprockets simultaneously. On those few out of line sprockets, the load pawl does not seat in both sprockets simultaneously causing the sprocket teeth not to hold as they are designed to. This can result in the securement system not supporting the wheelchair in a crash.

The matter was brought to Sure-Lok, Inc.'s attention by the State of Florida who observed a defective sprocket. On July 29, 2004, the State of Florida examined 350 sprockets and identified three that were defective. Our examination of the issue has resulted in this letter. The attached correspondence sets forth Sure-Lok, Inc.'s program for remedying the defect. The program requires each retractor assembly to be inspected. The inspection is a simple process that may be done on site, and in those cases, where a defective sprocket is identified, the product will be returned to us and a replacement will be provided at no cost to the customer. In the unlikely event that a customer has already paid to replace the defective part, Sure-Lok, Inc. will reimburse the customer for their costs.

Sure-Lok, Inc. is interested in mailing out the attached customer letter as soon as possible. The notification will be completed within two weeks from the date it starts. Please notify us as soon as possible that the customer letter has been approved and provide us with the recall number.

Also attached is the required list of OEM's that may have received the subject retractor.

Very truly yours,

Lynn K. Domalewski
Vice President of Human Resources

Enclosures:

OEM list
Envelope sample
Customer letter
Safety Bulletin