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OFFICE OF  
DEFECT INVESTIGATION

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June 3, 2005

Ms. Kelly Schuler  
Sr. Associate Administrator for Vehicle Safety  
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration  
400 Seventh Street, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20590

**Re: Owner Notification, FL-429, NHTSA no 04V-398.**

Ms. Schuler:

Due to a misunderstanding, the attached draft owner notification letter was not sent. However, Thomas Built has been working with the customer to inspect and repair buses. Inspections started the same week the Part 573 Defect Information Report was sent to NHTSA in August 2004. All of the buses have been inspected, approximately 1,110 have been modified, and 142 remain to be repaired.

A copy of the completed owner notification letter will be sent with a supplemental report.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely yours,

  
Timothy Blubaugh

Enclosure

Certified Mail Article Number:

7003 2260 0001 3402 7058

, 2004

Recall 04V-398

Dear Thomas Bus Owner,

This notice is sent to you in accordance with the requirements of the National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act. Thomas Built Buses, Inc. has decided that a defect, which relates to motor vehicle safety, exists in the vehicle identified on the enclosed postcard (Form PSD 304).

This recall involves Thomas Built Saf-T-Liner MVP-ER transit buses manufactured from January 1995 through February 1996 and sold to South Carolina. Some school buses operated in South Carolina on predominately unimproved roads may develop cracks in the bus body framing structure members ("rafters") near horizontal window header welds and at side emergency exit door frames. These buses were manufactured with special galvanized steel and two opposing side emergency exit doors. Due to the unique construction of the South Carolina buses, coupled with the fact many run on unimproved roads, cracks in rafters could form between the side emergency door and entrance door and if not repaired may compromise passenger safety in the event a severe crash results in impact over the weakened area.

You should immediately contact your Thomas Built Buses dealer for an appointment to have your vehicle modified. Thomas Built Buses will remedy this defect without charge. Thomas will inspect each unit and if any rafter is found to have a crack it will be repaired by addition of a reinforcement. To arrange for repairs, contact your local Thomas Built Buses dealer (attached you will find a listing of all Thomas dealers listed by state). After the repair is made, please complete each postage paid card separately and return it to Thomas Built Buses to verify completion.

In addition to being used to verify repair completion, the postcard must be completed and returned if the vehicle does not need repair, if you no longer own the vehicle, or the vehicle identified on the postcard has been exported, stolen, or destroyed/totaled. Federal law requires that any vehicle lessor receiving the recall notice must forward a copy of this notice to the lessee within 10 days.

If the defect is not remedied without charge and within a reasonable time, which is not longer than 60 days after you tender the vehicle for repair, please contact the Customer Support Office at (336)-889-4871, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. eastern standard time Monday through Friday, e-mail address [Tracy.Sauerbrey@Thomasbus.com](mailto:Tracy.Sauerbrey@Thomasbus.com). You may also submit a complaint to the Administrator, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 400 7<sup>th</sup> Street S. W., Washington, DC 20590, or phone (888)-327-4236. If your vehicle is involved in the Canadian portion, you may notify the Manager, Recall and Public Compliance, Road and Motor Vehicle Traffic Safety Branch, Transport Canada, Ottawa, Ontario or phone (613)-993-9851.

Sincerely,

Tracy Sauerbrey  
Customer Support Division

/ts

Enclosures

Postcard