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OFFICE OF
DEFECTS INVESTIGATION

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March 24, 2005

Kenneth N. Weinstein
Associate Administrator for Safety Assurance (NSA-01)
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
400 Seventh Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590

05 V-125
(2 pages)

Re: Defect Information Report FL-442, Sterling rear axle wheel ends

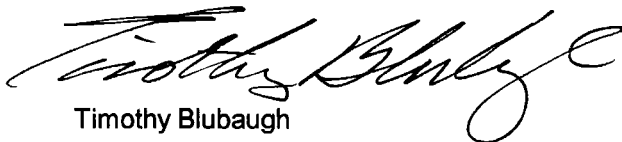
Mr. Weinstein:

In accordance with Part 573 of Title 49 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Freightliner LLC herewith reports a safety campaign to recall approximately 1,500 Sterling A-Line, L-Line, and Acterra manufactured November 6, 2004 to March 9, 2005 that may have a defect in the rear wheel end adjustment.

Attached is Freightliner's Defect Information Report.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely yours,



Timothy Blubaugh

Cc: Michael Mason, CAL-OSHA
DOSH, Legal Unit
10th Floor
455 Golden Gate Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94102

Enclosure

Certified Mail Article Number:

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Defect Information Report

(Section 573.6)

March 24, 2005

(c)(1) **Manufacturer:** Freightliner LLC
P.O. BOX 3849
Portland, Oregon 97208
(503) 745-5219

Brands: Sterling

(c)(2) **Vehicles identification:**

Model(s) affected: Sterling A-Line, L-Line, and Acterra

Manufacture Dates: Weekend shift, November 26, 2004 to March 9, 2005

Basis for determining population: Vehicles manufactured at St. Thomas, Ontario with rear axle wheel ends assembled by new staff on weekend shift prior to completion of corrective actions.

Component manufacturer if other than the vehicle manufacturer: not applicable

(c)(3) **Total number of vehicles potentially affected:** approximately 1,500

(c)(4) **Percentage of vehicles estimated to contain the defect:** unknown

(c)(5) **Description of the defect:**

Rear hub bearings may have been incorrectly adjusted. Rear axle wheel ends with excessive bearing preload adjustment will overheat and may cause a fire.

(c)(6) **Chronology of principal events:**

In early January, 2005, Freightliner Quality received two reports of fires caused by overheated rear wheel end bearings on trucks being transported to dealers. The Quality Department at the St. Thomas manufacturing plant also received reports of damaged bearings at low mileage and started an investigation on the production installation.

The manufacturing plant at St. Thomas uses a machine to install and adjust the rear bearings and torque the hub nuts. The schedule is not sequential so the machine must be reset by the operator to adjust different hubs. An inexperienced operator on weekend shift did not know the correct procedure. St. Thomas completed corrective action March 9, 2005

(c)(7) **Noncompliance-test or other data:** not applicable

(c)(8) **Remedial program:** Repairs will be performed by Sterling dealerships and Direct Warranty customers, i.e., customers approved by Freightliner to do their own warranty repairs.

Estimated Owner Notification Date: Freightliner Field Service is notifying dealers to check delivered vehicles on their lots. The dealers have been requested to contact customers to bring their trucks in. The rear wheel end installation will be checked to verify bearing adjustment and repair trucks with damaged bearings. This action will be followed with formal notification to customers and recall campaign. Damage to the bearings is expected to occur at very low miles if the wheel ends were installed with excessive preload. Written customer notification will be by first class mail using Freightliner records to determine the customers affected. This will be completed approximately April 25, 2005.

Reimbursement Plan: All prior repairs have been covered by warranty.

(c) (9) **Communications sent to dealers and owners:** Copies will be submitted as a supplemental report when available.

(c) (10) **Copy of proposed owner notification letter:** A draft will be sent for ODI review when available.

(c) (11) **Manufacturer's campaign number:** FL-442