

06 V-302
(12 pages)

Part 573 Defect Report

On July 25, 2006, 4-Star Trailers, Inc., 10000 N. W. 10th Street, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73127, telephone 405.324-7827 (4-Star) determined that a defect which relates to motor vehicle safety exists in certain aluminum horse trailers and accessories, as listed below, and is furnishing notification to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration in accordance with 49 CFR Part 573 Defect and Noncompliance Reports.

Date this report was prepared: July 26, 2006.

1. The full corporate name of the fabricating manufacturer of the vehicle and accessory's being recalled is 4-Star Trailers, Inc.

The corporate official whom the agency should contact with respect to this recall is Randy McArthur, whose telephone number is: (405) 324-7827, ex. 140, and whose fax number is (405) 324-7625.

This report was prepared by Randy McArthur.


Randy McArthur

2. Vehicles and components involved in the Recall:

The vehicles which are the subject of this recall are 4-Star trailers with factory mounted haypods, beginning with manufacture on August 1, 2004 and continuing through July 25, 2006, and haypod assemblies manufactured during the same period sent to dealers as an after-market accessory. A haypod is an enclosed aluminum box-like container that is mounted on top of a horse trailer to provide storage, not just for hay, but for any item which will fit within the confines of the container. These "haypods" were mounted on top of only those trailers ordered with such accessory, and haypod assemblies sold separately. Of the trailers on which the haypods were mounted, and of the haypod assemblies sold separately, all have suspect inadequate mountings which could come un-attached over the life of the trailer. Other 4-Star trailers are not affected.

3. The total number of vehicles produced with the haypod as a factory mounted accessory with inadequate mountings is 110, with 16 haypod assemblies sold separately to dealers.

4. The approximate percentage of the total number of vehicles estimated to actually contain the defect, and the haypod assemblies sold separately, is 100 percent.

Since potentially all haypod mountings are defective, all trailers manufactured with haypod mountings and all haypod assemblies sold separately, should be recalled. Haypods were only mounted on trailers beginning with manufacturing on August 1, 2004, and continuing until the determination was made that a potential defect existed, July 25, 2006, with haypod assemblies being manufactured and sold separately during the same period.

5. The defect is best described as being an insufficient number of "huck" bolts securing the haypod to the roof mounting bracket. The haypod is an enclosed aluminum box, used for storage for trailer owners, mounted on top of their horse trailer. A mounting bracket is secured to the roof of the trailer using a bolt and nut securing system, which is not suspect. The mounting bracket is "L" shaped, with the horizontal side being longer and thinner than the vertical leg, which is shorter and thicker. The longer, thinner side of the bracket is affixed to the roof of the trailer in such a manner that the other side of the bracket extends vertically from the roof of the trailer. The haypod is then attached to this vertical "leg", using huck bolts. A huck bolt is a self-securing fastener that penetrates the lower portion of the haypod, with no securing nut on the inside of the haypod.

4-Star determined that the requisite number of huck bolts were possibly not used to attach the haypod to the mounting bracket, thus creating a potential defect.

If the requisite number of huck bolts or other fasteners is not used to secure the haypod to the mounting bracket, the haypod could come lose and disconnect from the mounting bracket, resulting in the haypod falling off of the top of the trailer.

Warnings are in 4-Star's owner's manual to check all components of the trailer before

each trip; however there is no specific warning to check the integrity of the mounting of the haypod to the roof bracket.

The haypod and the mounting assembly are all manufactured by 4-Star.

6. The chronology of events that lead to the determination that a potential defect exists began with the receipt of notification on July 10, 2006, from a 4-Star dealer, that one of his customers reported losing a haypod from his trailer. The customer reported to the dealer that one night he had driven home from an event with his trailer, and the next morning he noticed that his haypod was missing from the top of his trailer. The customer did not hear or see the haypod fall off of his trailer, nor have there been any reports of a falling object from a trailer that evening. This is the first time any customer has reported a missing haypod, and the report in itself, is not conclusive that the haypod did in fact fall off the trailer. 4-Star's dealer took pictures of the roof of the trailer which had minimal scratch marks and wear marks on the mounting bracket, which were inconclusive as to what had in fact happened to the haypod. However, 4-Star began an internal investigation to determine just how a haypod, whose empty weight could be as much as 500 pounds and filled weight, could be an additional 1,000 pounds, could come loose and fall off a trailer. Upon examining production practices, it was learned that at some time after the initial manufacture of the haypod accessory in late 2004, line personnel apparently began using an insufficient number of huck bolts to secure the haypod to the mounting bracket. This final determination that the numbers of huck bolts being used in the manufacturing process were insufficient was made July 25, 2006.

7. Not used.

8. To remedy this inadequacy, 4-Star proposes to supply to the customers and to 4-Star dealers, a retro-mounting kit, containing four (4) 3/8" hex head bolts x 2" long, four (4) 3/8" heavy hex self-locking nuts and, eight (8) 3/8" flat washers. The customer may, at the customer's election, take the trailer to a local 4-Star dealer or any local trailer repair facility, as they see fit. The repair consists of drilling a 3/8" diameter hole through the haypod side panel and the mounting bracket of the haypod 3/4" above the bottom of the haypod and at least 1", but no more than 6" from either end of the haypod mounting bracket. Assemble one (1) washer onto the bolt and push through the hole from the outside. Place first a washer then the nut on the other end of the bolt on the inside of the underside of the haypod, and tighten until snug. Repeat this process until two (2) bolts, one front and one rear, secure each side of the haypod to the mounting bracket. These additional mounting fasteners will secure the haypod to the mounting bracket, sufficiently to prevent loss. No change should be made to the existing huck bolts.

Beginning with July 25, 2006, production of the haypod has been altered to assure that the requisite numbers of 3/8" stainless steel bolts are now being used to secure the haypod to the mounting bracket. The integrity of the attachment of the mounting bracket to the trailer is not an issue.

The recall shall begin immediately upon receipt of approval from NHTSA of 4-Star's

proposed customer notification letter and dealer notification letter. Within three (3) business days of receipt of approval, 4-Star shall begin sending notice letters to the customers who purchased a trailer with the haypod accessory, to the last know address of such customers. Letters to dealers will also be sent at the same time. One hundred Ten (110) trailers were sold with the haypod accessory, and Sixteen (16) were manufactured as an after-market item sold separately. 4-Star has only 21 dealers to be contacted.

Sent with the notice letter shall be the retro-mounting kit, which will go to customers and dealers alike. As with any item of personal property that does not require licensing in all 50 states, there is no way to track transfers of trailers from the original purchaser. 4-Star will send notices, postage prepaid, certified, return receipt requested, to attempt to assure that all first purchasers receive the notice and retro-mounting kit, with the request that if such purchaser no longer owns the subject trailer, they will so notify 4-Star so that the notice can be sent to the new owner. We feel that since the time period of manufacture is recent, (August 1, 2004 to present) most first purchasers are likely to still own the trailer. However, 4-Star has no ability to track transfers where licensing is not required.

9. Attached hereto are copies of the proposed Notice to Owners, and Notice to Dealers. Also attached are photographs of a haypod, a haypod mounted on a trailer, a haypod mounting bracket, and the haypod secured to the mounting bracket with retro-fit bolts.



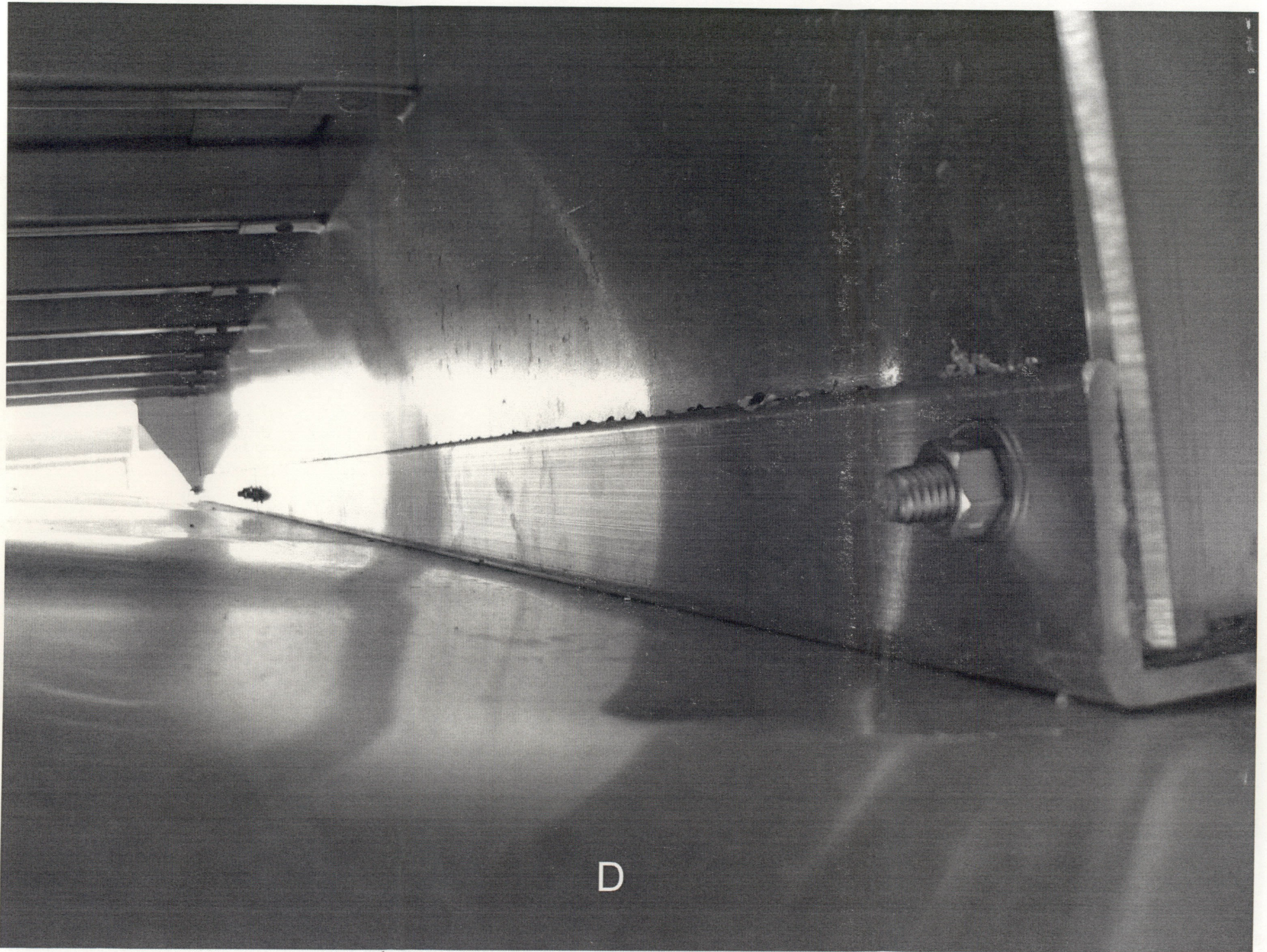
Photo of Hay Rack



Photo of HayPod mounted on a Trailer.



Photo of Haypod mounting bracket



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Photo of HayPod mounting bracket with retro-fit bolts.

Proposed Dealer Letter:

TO: ALL 4-STAR TRAILERS, INC., DEALERS

The National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act, as amended, provides that each vehicle which is subject to a recall campaign of this type must be adequately repaired within a reasonable time after the owner has tendered it for repair. Failure to repair within sixty (60) days after tender of a vehicle is prima facie evidence of failure to repair within a reasonable time.

If the condition is not adequately repaired within a reasonable time, the owner may be entitled to an identical or reasonable equivalent vehicle at no charge or to a refund of the purchase price less a reasonable allowance for depreciation.

To avoid having to provide these burdensome solutions, every effort must be made to promptly schedule an appointment with each owner and to repair their vehicle as soon as possible. As you will see in reading the attached copy of the letter that is being sent to owners, the owners are being instructed to contact 4-Star Customer Service if their dealer does not remedy the condition within three (3) days of the mutually agreed upon service date. If the condition is not remedied within a reasonable time, they are instructed on how to contact the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

DEFECT INVOLVED

4-Star has determined that a defect which relates to motor vehicle safety exists in certain aluminum horse trailers with haypods mounted on the top of the trailer, and haypod assemblies sold separately. These vehicles and assemblies have been determined to have a defect in the fasteners which attach the haypod to the mounting bracket on top of the trailers. It may be that an inadequate number of huck bolts (fasteners) were used to secure the haypod to the mounting bracket. Should there be an inadequate number of fasteners to secure the haypod to the mounting bracket, the fasteners could fail, allowing the haypod to become detached from the mounting bracket and fall from the top of the trailer.

To remedy this defect, 4-Star is sending to you retro-mounting kits containing four (4) 3/8" hex head bolts x 2" long, four (4) 3/8" heavy hex self-locking nuts, and eight (8) 3/8" flat washers. One kit should be used for each trailer to be retrofitted. The repair consists of drilling a 3/8" diameter hole through the haypod mounting bracket and the side panel of the haypod 3/4" above the bottom of the haypod and at least 1" from, but no more than 6" from either end of the haypod mounting bracket. Assemble one (1) washer onto the bolt and push through the hole from the outside. Place first a washer then the nut on the end of the bolt on the inside of the underside of the haypod, and tighten the nut until snug. Repeat this process until two (2) bolts, one front and one rear, secure each side of the haypod to the mounting bracket. These additional mounting fasteners will secure the haypod to the mounting bracket, sufficiently to prevent loss. No change should be made to the existing huck bolts. This work is to be performed at no charge to the customer.

VEHICLES INVOLVED

The only trailers subject to this Recall are trailers manufactured on or after August 1, 2004, through July 25, 2006, which have as a factory added accessory, the covered haypod attached to the roof of the trailer, and the haypod assemblies which were sold separately as an after-market item. 4-Star will supply you with the names and address (if known) of owners who purchased these trailers for your follow-up in insuring that this correction is made, however, you should examine your own records to assure that all customers of these products are notified.

4-Star Trailers, Inc.

By:

Nelson Holloway, General Mgr.

Proposed Owner Letter:

Dear 4-Star Trailer Owner;

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

REASON FOR THIS RECALL

4-Star Trailers, Inc. (4-Star) has determined that a defect which relates to motor vehicle safety exists in certain trailers equipped with covered haypods manufactured from August 1, 2004 through July 25, 2006, and with haypod assemblies manufactured and sold separately during the same time period. Specifically, the fasteners securing the haypod to the roof mounting bracket may fail, allowing the haypod to separate from the trailer. This could pose a serious hazard to yourself and others.

Your trailer, identified with this Owner Notification Letter is affected. For this reason we ask that you arrange for service to correct the condition without delay. The service and required parts as described in this letter, will be provided free of charge.

WHAT YOU SHOULD DO

To correct this condition, your dealer or repair shop will need to install new fasteners (enclosed herein) securing the haypod to the mounting bracket on the roof of the trailer.

This repair will take about one (1) hour to complete. Additional time may be required depending on how appointments are scheduled and processed. To obtain this free service:

Contact your 4-Star dealer as soon as possible to schedule an appointment for the free service,

Or,

Take the repair kit included with this letter, to a repair shop of your choice to have the retro-mounting kit installed.

In either case, take this Owner Notification Letter with you at the time of your appointment and present it to your service provider. The letter identifies the vehicle and required service. If you take your vehicle to a repair shop other than a 4-Star Dealer, for a complete refund, send the invoice for the service charge by mail to: Randy McArthur, 4-Star Trailers, Inc., 10000 N. W. 10th Street, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73127, or via FAX to (405) 324-7625. If you take your vehicle to your dealer on the agreed service date, and they do not remedy this condition on that date or within three (3) days, we recommend you contact 4-Star Warranty and Service Department at 1-800-848-3095. A 4-Star representative will arrange for prompt attention to your trailer.

After contacting your dealer and 4-Star, if you are still not able to have the safety defect remedied without charge and within a reasonable time, you may wish to write the Administer, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 400 Seventh Street, SW, Washington DC 20590, or call 1-888-DASH-2-DOT (1-888-327-4236). (Washington DC residents use 1-202-366-0123).

We are sorry to cause this inconvenience; however, we have taken this action in the interest of your safety and continued satisfaction with our products.

4-Star Trailers, Inc.

By:

Nelson Holloway, General Mgr.