



November 14, 2008

Associate Administrator for Enforcement
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue S.E.
Washington, DC 20590

08V-609
(7 pages)

ATTENTION: Mrs. Pat Wallace

The following information is submitted in accordance with the requirements of 49 CFR Part 573.6 as it applies to a possible defect relating to motor vehicle safety.

573.6(c)(1)

American LaFrance, LLC ("American LaFrance")
1090 Newton Way
Summerville, SC 29483-7430

573.6(c)(2)

This notice covers certain American LaFrance Condor chassis-cabs that have been fitted with a certain hydraulic system to raise and lower the vehicle cab for maintenance activities. The issues described in this notice also are relevant to certain vehicles manufactured and badged as Freightliner and/or Sterling by certain direct or indirect affiliates of Daimler Trucks North America, LLC, formally Freightliner, LLC (collectively, "Sellers") from whom American LaFrance purchased certain assets under an Asset Purchase Agreement dated as of December 14, 2005 (the "Agreement").

573.6(c)(3)

The number of affected vehicles produced and badged as Condor by American LaFrance after the purchase of the company is one thousand, two hundred and fifty-one (1251). The population produced by Sellers and badged as Freightliner is estimated at two thousand, and eighty-two (2082) and it is estimated there was one thousand and forty-four (1044) Sterling badged vehicles. The serial number range is between F32500 and Z65648 with manufacturing dates between February 24, 2000 and August 31, 2007.

573.6(c)(4)

Percentage of vehicles expected to contain the suspected condition is 100%.

573.6(c)(5)

American LaFrance through its Customer Service Organization has been notified of four (4) incidents in which the bracket that attaches the hydraulic cylinder to the cab used to raise and lower the vehicle cab for maintenance activities has apparently failed.

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DEFECTS INVESTIGATION
RECALL MGMT DIV.

Description of Potential Defect:

The cab can be tilted open 42 degrees to access the engine and other components (See Photo # 1 on Page 4). A hydraulic pump located behind the right side of the cab is used to operate the hydraulic cab tilt mechanism. The hydraulic cylinder is attached to the cab through a clevis and pin assembly that attaches to a cast aluminum bracket (see Photos 2 & 3). It is believed that the cast aluminum bracket is at risk of failing.

Based on our investigation to date, which is continuing, there appears to be two modes of bracket failure. The first mode is that the clevis pin elongates the slot in the cab bracket to a point that the bracket will fail due to lack of bracket material (see Photo # 4). The second mode is due to wear between the clevis on the end of the hydraulic cylinder and the cab bracket. The material around the hole where the clevis pin attaches the two together wears thin and eventually the bracket material will fail (see Photo 5). Photo # 6 shows a combination of the two failure modes. If the bracket fails during the lifting segment of raising the cab, the cab will fall unrestrained back down onto the chassis. If the bracket fails due to the forces encountered when the cab passes the break over point and reaches the end of the cylinder travel, the cab will continue its forward movement until it reaches the ground (see Photo # 7). To date, no injuries have occurred to our knowledge related to the above.

573.6 (c)(6) Chronology

- 2/5/2008 – First reported failure that a cab on a 2003 model year truck fell windshield first onto the pavement.
- 2/11/2008 – Investigation was initiated.
- 3/12/2008 – Cab would not raise for maintenance and engine repair. Tilt cylinder broke away from the bracket when attempting to raise cab. Cylinder extended and damaged R.H. wiper motor and front cover.
- 3/31/2008 – Nine vehicles were inspected with in service dates between 3/24/2003 and 10/15/2006 and mileages between 10,335 and 226,873. There was no clear evidence that the wear was mileage related as one unit with 18,854 miles had as much wear as a unit with over 250,000 miles.
- 4/4/2008 – Four more vehicles were inspected with in service dates between 6/5/2005 and 11/13/2006. Three of the vehicles had mileages in the 106,000 mile range and the 4th unit was in the 40,000 mile range. All vehicles exhibited both modes of wear to varying degrees.

4/9/2008 – Five more vehicles were inspected with in service dates between 4/1/2004 and 9/25/2005. Four of the vehicles had mileages in the 50,000 mile range and the 5th unit was in the 25,000 mile range. All vehicles exhibited Mode 1 wear patterns but only two of the 50,000 mile units exhibited Mode 2 wear patterns.

NOTE: On January 28, 2008 American LaFrance filed for bankruptcy under Chapter 11. American LaFrance emerged from Chapter 11 status on July 24, 2008. During this period of time all of the personnel originally assigned to this investigation and their supervisors were either terminated or they left on their own for employment elsewhere; a new team has been assembled and is continuing this investigation.

573.6(c)(7)
Not applicable.

573.6(c)(8)
American LaFrance will initiate a voluntary owner notification and recall of all one thousand, two hundred and fifty-one (1251) vehicles that the company has manufactured using this style of hydraulic system to raise and lower the vehicle cab for maintenance activities.

American LaFrance believes this issue has gone undetected to these vehicle owners and therefore no pre-notification repairs would have been made at the expense of the owner.

The number which American LaFrance has assigned to this investigation for tracking purposes is **ALF - 0308**.

Very Truly Yours
AMERICAN LAFRANCE, LLC

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stan R. Gornick". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized "S" and "G".

Stan R. Gornick, P. Eng.
Manager, Compliance



PHOTO # 1



PHOTO # 2



PHOTO # 3



PHOTO # 4

PHOTO # 5



PHOTO

6



PHOTO # 7