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By Recall Management Division at 10:27 am, Oct 31, 2013

October 30, 2013

Ms. Nancy Lewis
Associate Administrator for Enforcement
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington DC 20590

Dear Ms. Lewis,

In accordance with the requirements of CFR 49 Part 573.6 Blue Bird Corporation is submitting the attached defect report.

This report was emailed to Kelly Schuler at NHTSA on October 30, 2013.

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

Respectfully,

Bill Coleman
Corporate Recall Administrator

Enclosure:

49 CFR Part 573.6 Defect Report for Recall R13WR Front Suspension Bolts May Break



49 CFR, PART 573.6 Defect and Noncompliance Reporting

Defect Report

Report Date: October 30, 2013

1. Vehicles affected are manufactured by:

Blue Bird Corporation
P. O. Box 937
Fort Valley, GA 31030

2. The following vehicles are being recalled:

Certain 2014 model year Blue Bird all American and Conventional school buses manufactured from July 02, 2013 through October 03, 2013.

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

1,747

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

Unknown

5. The defect consists of:

The front suspension bolts may break as a result of hydrogen embrittlement which may have occurred during the bolt manufacturing process.

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

During the week of August 19, 2013 a fractured bolt was found in the factory chassis manufacturing inspection area. Blue Bird began an inspection of buses in process and ready for delivery. When the inspection was completed, seven (7) front suspension bolts were discovered broken at lock nut interface. All failed bolts found were marked with a "ZY" code on the bolt head.



On September 05, 2013 Blue Bird conducted torque and tension test on sample bolts taken from production bins with both "ZY" and "JH" head markings. Bolts with both head markings were found to be within acceptable torque and tension values.

On September 09, 2013 all bolts with the "ZY" head markings were removed from Blue Bird inventory.

On September 10, 2013 Blue Bird received a report from a dealer that they had a bus on their lot with a broken front suspension bolt. The dealer was contacted and asked to return the broken bolt to Blue Bird for analysis.

On September 16, 2013 Blue Bird was advised by another dealer of a bus with broken front suspension bolts. The dealer was also contacted and asked to return the broken bolts to Blue Bird.

On October 10, 2013 Blue Bird received the broken bolts from the dealers and returned them to the bolt supplier for examination. The factory supplier contacted a third party laboratory to conduct a metallurgical study on two bolts. The third party laboratory concluded that hydrogen embrittlement was the likely cause of the failures. This mechanism allows bolts to typically fail within 1 to 48 hours of installation. Based upon review it was determined that all subject bolts were marked with a "ZY" code on the bolt head.

Based on the torque and tension test performed by Blue Bird and the metallurgical findings of the third party lab and typical failure characteristics produced by hydrogen embrittlement it was concluded that hydrogen embrittlement was likely the cause of the bolt failures.

Although broken bolts in the front suspension would require greater steering inputs to produce expected road wheel responses, at no time would steering become fully inoperable. However, Blue Bird determined the degradation of steering performance is deemed an undesirable occurrence.

On October 27, 2013 Blue Bird decided to issue a recall to correct this effect.

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

All subject buses will be inspected for the subject "ZY code on bolt head. All bolts found with the "ZY" bolt head markings will be replaced at no cost to customer.



8. Notification will be as follows:

Dealer notification is scheduled to be mailed on or about December 05, 2013.
Owner notification is scheduled to be mailed on or about December 05, 2013.
Parts are anticipated to be available at time of notification.

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

R13WR

10. Dealer and Owner Notification:

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
Corporate Recall Administrator
Blue Bird Corporation
P.O. Box 937
Fort Valley GA 31030
(478) 822-2242

Signed: William P. Coleman
William P. Coleman, Corporate Recall Administrator