



U.S. Department
of Transportation

**National Highway
Traffic Safety
Administration**

ODI RESUME

Investigation: DP 09-006
Prompted by: Owner letters, Consumer Complaints
Date Opened: 11/30/2009 **Date Closed:** 11/20/2015
Investigator: Ric Willard **Reviewer:** Bruce York-B
Approver: Otto Matheke
Subject: Alleged inadequate recall remedy 07V-586

MANUFACTURER & PRODUCT INFORMATION

Manufacturer: Blue Bird Body Company
Products: 2005 - 07 Model Year Blue Bird Wanderlodge M450 Motor Home
Population: 58
Problem Description: Owners of subject vehicles allege the remedy for recall 07V-586 is inadequate.

FAILURE REPORT SUMMARY

	ODI	Manufacturer	Total
Complaints:	10	0	10
Crashes/Fires:	3	0	3
Injury Incidents:	0	0	0
Fatality Incidents:	0	0	0
Other*:	2	0	2

*Description of Other: Media reports of crashes involving the subject vehicles.

ACTION / SUMMARY INFORMATION

Action: Grant owners' petition, open a Preliminary Evaluation (PE15-035)

Summary:

On December 11, 2007, Blue Bird Corporation (BBC) submitted an uninfluenced recall 07V-586 to the agency. This recall described a defect on fifty eight 2005–2007 Model Year (MY) Wanderlodge Recreational Vehicles (RV) where the curb weight of the front axle could exceed the axle's 16,000 pound rating. To address the issue, BBC replaced the tie rods on the vehicle to a more robust version increasing the rating of the front axle to 17,000 pounds. In addition, BBC relocated a generator rearward from the front of the vehicle and provided updated storage bay weight limit placards for installation in each of the vehicles three storage bays.

On March 11, 2008, BBC submitted an amendment to the 07V-586 recall. In this amendment, BBC added three more remedial actions to the original recall. In addition to the original recall remedies, BBC would replace the front tires (with the same model tires) perform a front end alignment, and add new tire data placards instructing operators to maintain the vehicle tire pressure at 130 psi (the maximum tire pressure for that model tire).

Following receipt of a consumer complaint (10226544) alleging that some of the vehicles subject to recall 07V-586 had front axle curb weights in excess of 17,000 pounds and that operators did not have a reasonable way to maintain tire pressures at 130 psi (as required by recall 07V-586), NHTSA opened Recall Query RQ08-004. The recall query was

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closed on November 3, 2008 after BBC agreed to install compressors on the RVs capable of inflating tires to 130 psi, and a tire inflation placard on the vehicle dash board. At that time, ODI did not identify any axle (front or rear) or tires failures that could be positively attributed to vehicle overloading.

Nearly a year after closing investigation RQ08-004, NHTSA received nine petitions asking that the agency reopen the investigation. These petitions stated that the owners felt the BBC remedies were inadequate and expressed dissatisfaction with the following alleged issues: (1) remedied vehicles had diminished cargo capacity; (2) relocation of the generator resulted in increased noise and ventilation issues; (3) vehicle weight exceeded the manufacturer's specified weight rating for the front axle; (4) the recommended 130 psi inflation pressure in front tires was impractical; (5) the weight and passenger restrictions were impractical; and (6) vehicles were not weighed consistent with RVIA recommendations. In addition to the petitions, NHTSA had also received seven consumer complaints (many from the same owners who had filed petitions) that described similar concerns as the petitions.

At the time (fall of 2009) NHTSA received the petitions and complaints alleging the BBC remedies were inadequate, the agency was unaware of any post-remedy failures (of tires, axles, or any other safety system on the subject vehicles) involving the updated recall. Although NHTSA was concerned that motor home owners might be unwilling or unable to maintain high inflation pressures in their tires (underinflated tires reduce load capacity and could lead to tire failure), the petitions and complaints all focused on the loss of utility resulting from the application of the remedies and did not identify or present evidence of any ongoing safety concerns that the remedies failed to address. In the time since the last petition was received (November 2009) NHTSA has been monitoring its consumer complaint database and other data sources to detect and determine if safety issues associated with overloaded front axles in the Wanderlodge RVs appeared. During that time, NHTSA received two consumer complaints and became aware of three crashes of the subject vehicles. One of the complaints was similar to the original petitions in that it focused on utility loss and not safety issues. The second complaint (received May 2014) described a crash that occurred in May 2013 that was also identified in media reports. The second and third crashes occurred in August 2013 and January 2015. In all three of the crashes one of the front tires was alleged to have failed prior to the crash.

Because these crash reports indicate the remedies applied to the subject vehicles may not have adequately addressed the safety risks posed by the overloaded front tires, NHTSA has decided to grant the petitions and open an investigation. Preliminary Evaluation PE15-035 has been opened to assess the adequacy of the 07V-586 recall to address potential tire overloading and the safety risks posed by that condition.

The ODI reports cited above can be reviewed at:

<http://www-odi.nhtsa.dot.gov/owners/SearchNHTSAID>

using the following complaint identification numbers: 10594501, 10318626, 10293828, 10292809, 10291585, 10290688, 10289185, 10273409, 10266596, 10226544