

Associate Administrator for Safety Assurance
NATIONAL HIGHWAY TRAFFIC SAFETY ADMINISTRATOR
400 Seventh St., S.W.
Washington D.C. 20590

99V-294 (01)

This letter is being submitted to provide notice to the NHTSA that Fleetwood Enterprises, Inc., will conduct a voluntary safety recall of "Certain" 1997 and 1998 Avion and Westport fifth wheel travel trailers. Fleetwood intends to proceed in accordance with 49 CFR Part 573.9 "Defect and Noncompliance Reports".

The following is the information required by 49 CFR part 573.9:

- This report was prepared on October 13, 1999.
 - Fleetwood has assigned 91112 as an identification code to this voluntary recall.
1. The subject fifth wheel travel trailers were manufactured at the following wholly owned subsidiary of Fleetwood Enterprises, Inc.:
Fleetwood Travel Trailers of Nebraska, Inc
13737 Industrial Road, P.O. Box 37638
Omaha, Nebraska 68137

The agency should contact the following individual with respect to this recall:

Robert E. Wozniak
Director of Engineering Services
Motor Home Group
Fleetwood Enterprises, Inc.
2970 Myers Street
P.O. Box 7638
Riverside, California 92513-7638

This report was prepared by:

Craig S. Biazio
Service Administrator
RV Towable Group
Fleetwood Enterprises, Inc.
3030 Myers Street
P.O. Box 7638
Riverside, California 92513-7638

2. The subject fifth wheel travel trailers include "all" 1997 and certain 1998 model year Avion and Westport fifth wheel travel trailers manufactured between June 28, 1996 and March 17, 1998 at the Omaha, Nebraska manufacturing center. The subject fifth wheel travel trailers have Fleetwood identification numbers ranging from 1EM5W3624V9312765 TO 1EE5C3320W9314366.

The June 1996 date coincides with the start of the 1997 model year production of Avion and Westport fifth wheel travel trailers at the Omaha, Nebraska manufacturing facility.

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DEFECTS INVESTIGATION OFFICE

The March 1998 date coincides with design changes and the implementation of those changes in the manufacturing process of 1998 model year Avion and Westport fifth wheel travel trailers.

3. Fleetwood reports the following as an approximate number of 1997/1998 Avion and Westport fifth wheel travel trailers subject to this recall:

| <u>Make</u> | <u>Model Year</u> | <u>Number of Units</u> |
|--------------|-------------------|------------------------|
| Avion | 1997 | 402 |
| Westport | 1997 | 533 |
| Avion | 1998 | 367 |
| Westport | 1998 | 299 |
| <u>Total</u> | | <u>1601</u> |

4. Fleetwood estimates that 80% of the identified units contain the safety defect.
5. In September of 1997 we began receiving complaints of upper chassis structural failures and excessive flexing in the area of the pin box on 1997 and 1998 Avion and Westport fifth wheel travel trailers.

An investigation determined that a change beginning with the 1997 model year in the upper chassis tubing from 7 gauge to 11 gauge steel decreased strength in the upper chassis. The result of the change caused a tensile fatigue failure (tearing) of the front and/or second cross members.

In March 1998, these 11 gauge tubes were changed back to 7 gauge as a precautionary measure until a complete determination of cause could be reached. Since this change was implemented, no complaints have been received on units that have been produced with the 7 gauge material.

Monitoring and analysis of all available information has continued and a report identified as NSA-12sby/PE99-041 was submitted to the NHTSA in June of 1999 identifying all known documents and dates related to our investigation. On August 23, 1999, a meeting was held to review all known gathered facts and engineering analysis. It was determined at that meeting that although Fleetwood's findings do not conclusively show that a safety defect is involved, it would be in our and our customers best interest to proceed with a field repair. No determination was made at that time what type of field campaign would be utilized to effectively repair all known units. It was decided that further review, information gathering and discussion was needed.

On September 07, 1999, it was concluded that the most effective means of repairing all affected field units would best be accomplished by conducting a voluntary safety defect recall campaign.

7. Not applicable

8. A Recall Service Bulletin will be provided that details the inspection and repair of the upper chassis. After initial disassembly and inspection, one of two different repair procedures will be required. If no significant tearing or fracture has occurred in the upper chassis, 7 gauge steel reinforcements will be welded to the front and second crossmembers. If inspection indicates significant tearing or fracture in this area, the pinbox and its support structure will be removed and replaced with the reinforced version.

In both cases the front wall, which is part of this structure, will be reinforced and reattached. The net effect will be to increase stiffness and strength of the pinbox support structure, which will prevent future failure in this area.

9. Fleetwood intends to conduct a dealer notification mailing on November 19, 1999. Fleetwood intends to begin a customer notification mailing on December 17, 1999. Normally, Fleetwood conducts its initial customer mailing seven days after the dealer mailing. However, the complexity of the repairs will require additional time to equip and supply materials to the dealers in advance of the customer mailing.
10. Copies of subsequent correspondence will be submitted to the NHTSA within five working days of distribution. This correspondence will include:

- I. Letter of Dealer Notification
- II. Letter of Customer Notification
- III. Recall Service Bulletin

In accordance with our customary practice, we are requesting your review of the enclosed draft letters to dealers and owners. Also enclosed is a draft of the Recall Service Bulletin which details the remedies to be applied to the subject fifth wheel travel trailers.

If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Mr. Robert E. Wozniak at (909) 351-3814.

Sincerely,

Fleetwood Enterprises, Inc.



Craig S. Biazio
Service Administrator
Fleetwood Towable Group

IMPORTANT RECALL INFORMATION

Dear Valued Fleetwood Fifth Wheel Customer:

This notice is sent to you in accordance with the requirements of the National Highway Traffic and Motor Vehicles Safety Act.

Fleetwood Enterprises, Inc. has determined that a defect relating to motor vehicle safety exists in certain 1997 and 1998 Avion and Westport fifth wheels built at our Omaha, Nebraska manufacturing facility.

What is the problem? The subject fifth wheel trailers can experience excessive flexing in the upper chassis which can lead to failure in the area of the pinbox. This can lead to a loss of vehicle control and result in personal injury and/or a vehicle accident.

What will Fleetwood do? The repair for this potential problem consists of reinforcing or replacing the pin box and its support structure at no charge to you. This should require minimal time and result in little inconvenience to you. Please rest assured that this repair will be performed only by an authorized, experienced repair facility.

What should you do? Since this defect affects motor vehicle safety, it is recommended that you immediately have your fifth wheel trailer repaired by contacting Fleetwood Customer Assistance Group at (800)619-8454. An associate will assist you in making an appointment to have this repair performed by an authorized Fleetwood Dealer or Fleetwood Service Facility. Repairs should take no longer than 35.0 hours.

**What
should
you do?
cont.**

If it is necessary for you to tow your fifth wheel trailer, be aware of any changes in the angle of the pinbox. The pin should be vertical and the plate around it should be horizontal when the trailer is level. In cases where the upper chassis has been damaged, the following early warning signs can be seen:

1. An increase in relative up-and-down motion between the pinbox and the surrounding structure. A small amount of movement is normal.
2. The pinbox pushing into and damaging (cracking) the lower front fiberglass cap. A small amount of flaking is normal.

Fleetwood believes that, unless these warning signs are seen, your fifth wheel trailer should be safe to tow until the repair is made. If you observe other unusual changes in this area or feel that there is damage that cannot be seen, stop towing and contact your dealer or Fleetwood Customer Assistance Group at (800) 619-8454 for immediate assistance.

When you deliver your fifth wheel for repairs, your dealer will complete a Fleetwood Repair Order. Upon completion of the repair, please sign the Fleetwood Repair Order and ask your dealer to return it to us.

If you no longer own this vehicle, please notify Fleetwood by calling our Customer Service Department at (800) 445-3307, stating the name, address, and telephone number of the person or party you sold it to. This will enable us to send this important recall information to the new owner.

If you are unable to obtain the specified repair promptly and without charge, please contact:

Fleetwood RV Towable Group
Fleetwood Enterprises, Inc.
P.O. Box 7638
Riverside, CA 92513-7638
(800) 445-3307

**What
should
you do?
cont.**

If you believe that the dealer and Fleetwood Enterprises, Inc. have failed or have been unable to remedy the defect without charge or within a reasonable period of time, you may submit a complaint to:

**Administrator
National Highway Traffic Safety Administrator
400 Seventh Street SW
Washington D.C. 20590**

or call the toll-free Auto Safety Hotline at (800) 424-9393. Residents of Washington D.C. area should call (202) 366-0123.

While this letter does not constitute an acknowledgment of legal liability, Fleetwood Enterprises, Inc. regrets any inconvenience this situation may cause you. We are taking these steps in the interest of your safety. We appreciate your prompt assistance in eliminating this potential hazard.

Sincerely,

FLEETWOOD ENTERPRISES, INC.

**Craig Biazo
Service Administrator
RV Towable Group**

99V-294 (07)

IMPORTANT RECALL INFORMATION

**TO: ALL FLEETWOOD DEALER PRINCIPALS
SERVICE MANAGERS, PARTS MANAGERS**

**SUBJECT: RECALL CAMPAIGN - 91112
(1997 and 1998 Avion/Westport Upper Chassis - Pin Box Recall)**

Fleetwood Enterprises, Inc. is requesting your assistance in conducting a voluntary recall notification campaign in accordance with the National Highway Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act.

Fleetwood Enterprises, Inc. has determined that a defect relating to motor vehicle safety exists in "all" 1997 and certain 1998 Avion and Westport fifth wheel travel trailers, manufactured at our Omaha, Nebraska manufacturing plant. We have determined that a safety defect exists in these fifth wheel trailers and are notifying owners in order to correct the problem. A copy of the letter sent to owners is enclosed for your information.

What is the problem? The subject fifth wheel trailers can experience excessive flexing and/or tearing of the upper chassis structure that supports and secures the pinbox to the chassis.

What should you do? Owners of the above mentioned fifth wheel trailers have been asked to contact Fleetwood's Customer Assistance Group for the name of the nearest authorized Fleetwood dealer to have the described defective condition remedied. In the event that you are contacted by a customer, please verify eligibility by referring to the serial number range listed on the following page and contact the Technical Assistance Group at (800) 619-8454 for further instructions. Any Fleetwood repair orders submitted for payment without "Prior Authorization" will be denied and returned accordingly.

99V-294 (08)

**What
should
you do?
cont.**

Should you perform this service, please complete the Fleetwood Repair Order (Form X-SR-042). Once repairs are completed, have the customer sign the Fleetwood Repair Order and return it to us. The repair order should be submitted to our Omaha, Nebraska Service Facility for payment. You will be paid a fee in accordance with Service Bulletin #91112. Customers will not be charged for these repairs.

If you have one of these vehicles in your inventory, you will be mailed a recall notice for that specific fifth wheel trailer involved in this recall. Fleetwood is asking our dealers to repair stock units on dealer lots. Once again, contact the Fleetwood Dealer Assistance Group at (800) 619-8454 for a "Prior Authorization" number and repair assistance prior to starting the recall repairs.

Federal Law (Section 154 of the National Traffic and Motor Vehicles Safety Act of 1966) requires that:

If you have received a notice of recall or failure to comply from Fleetwood or any component manufacturer, you must repair or otherwise correct the defects on vehicles remaining in your inventory, according to the notification, before selling or leasing the vehicles.

1. Identification of Involved Vehicles

| All 1997 Avion and Westport fifth wheels | Certain 1998 Avion and Westport fifth wheels |
|------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| 1EM5W362AV9312765 - 1EE5W3720V9313681 | 1KE5W3720W9313682 - 1EEC3326W9314365 |

2. Repair Procedure

If you are asked to perform this repair procedure, you will be faxed a copy of Recall Service Bulletin #91112 which describes the nature of the needed repair(s). Please make certain the recall is performed according to the instructions.

3. Parts Ordering

Contact the Parts Department at Omaha, Nebraska Service Center to place your parts order. Please refer to the Fleetwood service part number(s) contained on the Recall Bulletin #91112.

4. Flat Rate Allowance

The flat rate code to be used for this Safety Recall is as follows:

| Flat Rate Code | Description | Flat Rate Time |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 9066-11 - 9066-17 | Upper Chassis Reinforcement | 20.0 Hours |
| 9067-11 - 9067-17 | Upper Chassis Support Replacement | 35.0 Hours |

Please review this letter with your Parts and Service staff to familiarize them with this Voluntary Safety Recall Campaign.

Thank you for helping Fleetwood with its continuing efforts to maintain customer satisfaction.

Sincerely,

Craig Biazo
Service Administrator
RV Towable Group

Enclosures

RECALL SERVICE BULLETIN

99V-294 (10)

#91112

**1997 and 1998 Avion and Westport Fifth-wheel Trailers built by
Fleetwood Travel Trailers of Nebraska, Inc.**

Upper Chassis Repair

This Recall Service Bulletin describes the procedure to inspect, reinforce and if required, repair the pin box area of all 1997 and certain Avion and Westport fifth-wheel trailers.

PLEASE READ THROUGH ALL STEPS BEFORE PROCEEDING.

Parts Required

| | |
|----------|---------------------------------------|
| 124867 | Steel tube, 7-ga., 8" X 2" |
| 114761 | Steel angle, 1 1/2" X 1 1/2" X 1/8" |
| B10-4588 | Support, formed steel, 7-ga., 93 3/8" |
| 142282 | Pin box assembly |
| 084172 | Rivet, 3/16", countersunk |
| 150790 | Sealant |
| 143170 | Sealant, SIKA 221 |

Tools Required

| | |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Rivet Gun | Welder, MIG (gas-shielded wire fed) welding machine, 200-amp minimum, .035 diameter wire, AWS E7-S-3 or E7-08-6 |
| Drill motor | |
| Sealant applicator gun | |

Description of the repairs required

The repair involves the following procedures:

1. Exposure and inspection of the upper chassis members for cracking.
2. Reinforcement of the upper chassis area to reduce the possibility of future cracking
3. Repair of the area if inspection reveals cracking beyond specified limits.
4. Replacement of the pin box if required.
5. Reinstallation of front cap and moldings.

(OVER)

EXPOSURE AND INSPECTION OF UPPER CHASSIS

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NOTE: Be sure vehicle is on a level surface before proceeding.

1. Empty front wardrobe.
2. Drill out front molding rivets with #5 or $1/64$ " drill bit. Remove the rivets and pull down the lower front cap for access.
3. Empty front closet. Remove lower shelf. Remove front lower wall section.
4. See Figure 1. Remove and discard the 2 X 4 as shown. Reinforce the front by adding $1 1/2$ " X $1 1/2$ " framing. Fasten with white glue and staples. See Figure 2.

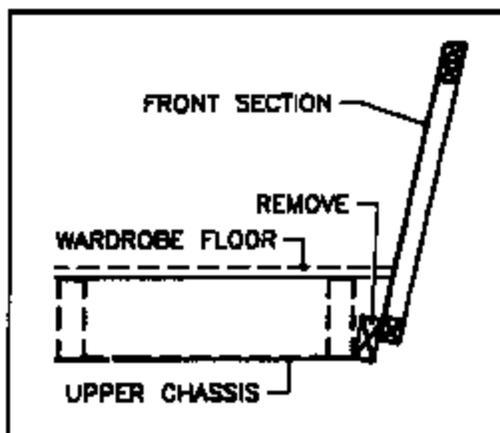


Figure 1

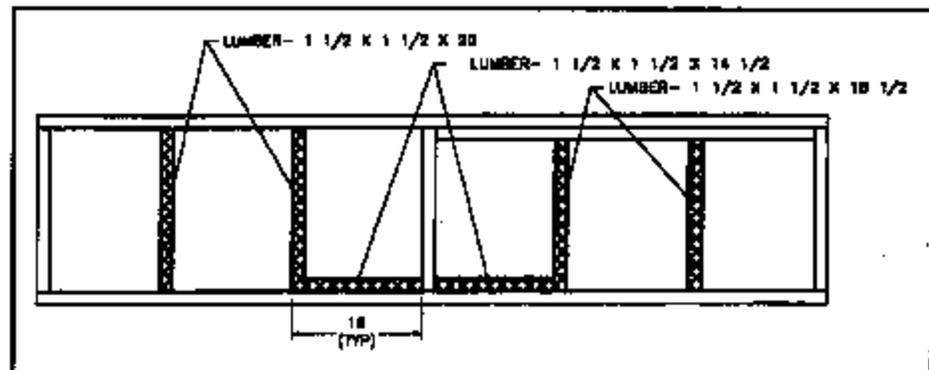


Figure 2

5. Remove sliding doors and lower rail. Pull up carpet and remove screws holding wardrobe floor. Remove wardrobe floor.
6. Inspect tubing and connections in pinbox area. Note and write down any cracks or buckling. The maximum for any cracking for this repair: three places at six inches each maximum. If cracking exceeds this amount, remove and replace entire front and second crossmembers, including pinbox. See **Replacing Crossmembers and Pin Box** procedure.

REINFORCING/REPAIRING UPPER CHASSIS

1. Realign tubes and pinbox. The front crossmember must be straight for the formed channel to fit. The pin and base plate must be square to the siderails. Weld any cracks to maintain alignment and to resecure tubing connections. These reinforcements will prevent cracks from reoccurring.
2. Place 7-ga. formed channel (Figure 3) over front crossmember. Grind any welds or other protrusions as required for good fit. Position as shown in Figure 4. Center on front crossmember and align ends with lower corners of sidewalls. Remember to leave $1\frac{1}{8}$ " for the front wall. Reroute wiring as required to protect from heat. Drill holes and/or extend if necessary to complete circuits after assembly. Weld formed channel as shown in Figure 5.

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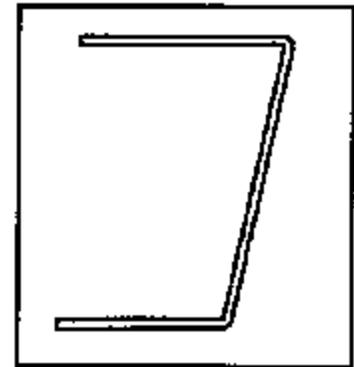


Figure 3

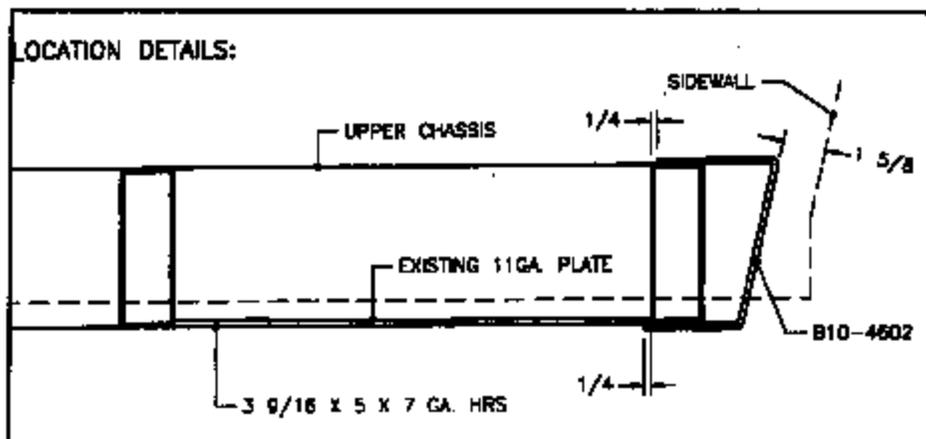


Figure 4

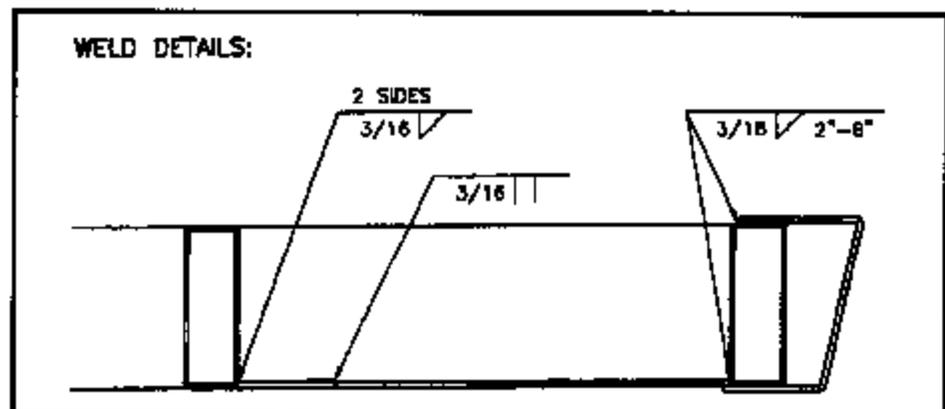


Figure 5

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3. Place insulating blanket between lower front cap and second crossmember. Remove two inches from ends of diagonal 1" X 1" tubes where they meet the second crossmember. This will improve access for next step.
4. Weld 3⁹/₁₆" X 5" X 7-ga. HRS plates as shown in Figure 5. Weld previously cut ends of 1" X 1" tube to these plates.
5. Prepare and paint all bare steel and allow to dry.
6. Replace the wardrobe floor. Fasten to crossmembers with #10 X 1⁵/₈" TEK screws every 12 inches. Predrill ⁵/₃₂" at the front crossmember if required to ease installation.
7. Place a double ³/₄" bead of urethane sealant adhesive (SIKA 221 or equivalent) on the front face of the formed channel reinforcement.
8. Replace lower front wall and fasten with ¹/₄-20 X 2⁵/₈" TEK screws. Predrill with #5 or ¹³/₆₄" drill bit. Place a ¹/₄" bead of SIKA on wall framing and overlay with 23" X 95¹/₂" X 2.7 mm lauan panel. Staple panel in place.

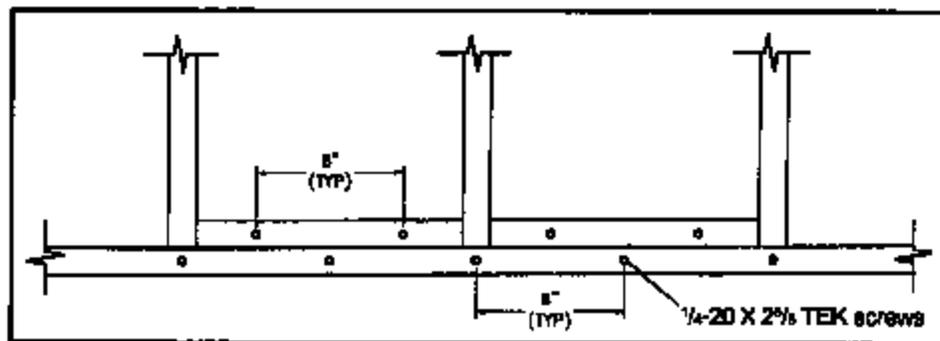


Figure 6

9. Reconnect wiring. Be sure to protect wiring from sharp edges. Replace front cap, moldings, breakaway switch, etc. Rivet with ³/₁₆" countersunk rivet, Arctic White P/N M08-4172. Seal moldings with acrylic latex sealant P/N 150790.

Replacing Crossmembers and Pin Box (see Figure 7) 99V-294 (24)

1. Remove the lower front cap. Reroute wiring as necessary to protect from heat; drill holes and/or extend if necessary to complete circuit after assembly.
2. Remove entire front and second crossmembers with pinbox assembly. Cut next to siderails and grind smooth.
3. Place new front chassis assembly inside of siderails and tack weld into place.
4. Check alignment at lower corners of front wall and fully weld ends of crossmembers to siderails.
5. Continue with Step 6 under Reinforcing/Repairing Upper Chassis.

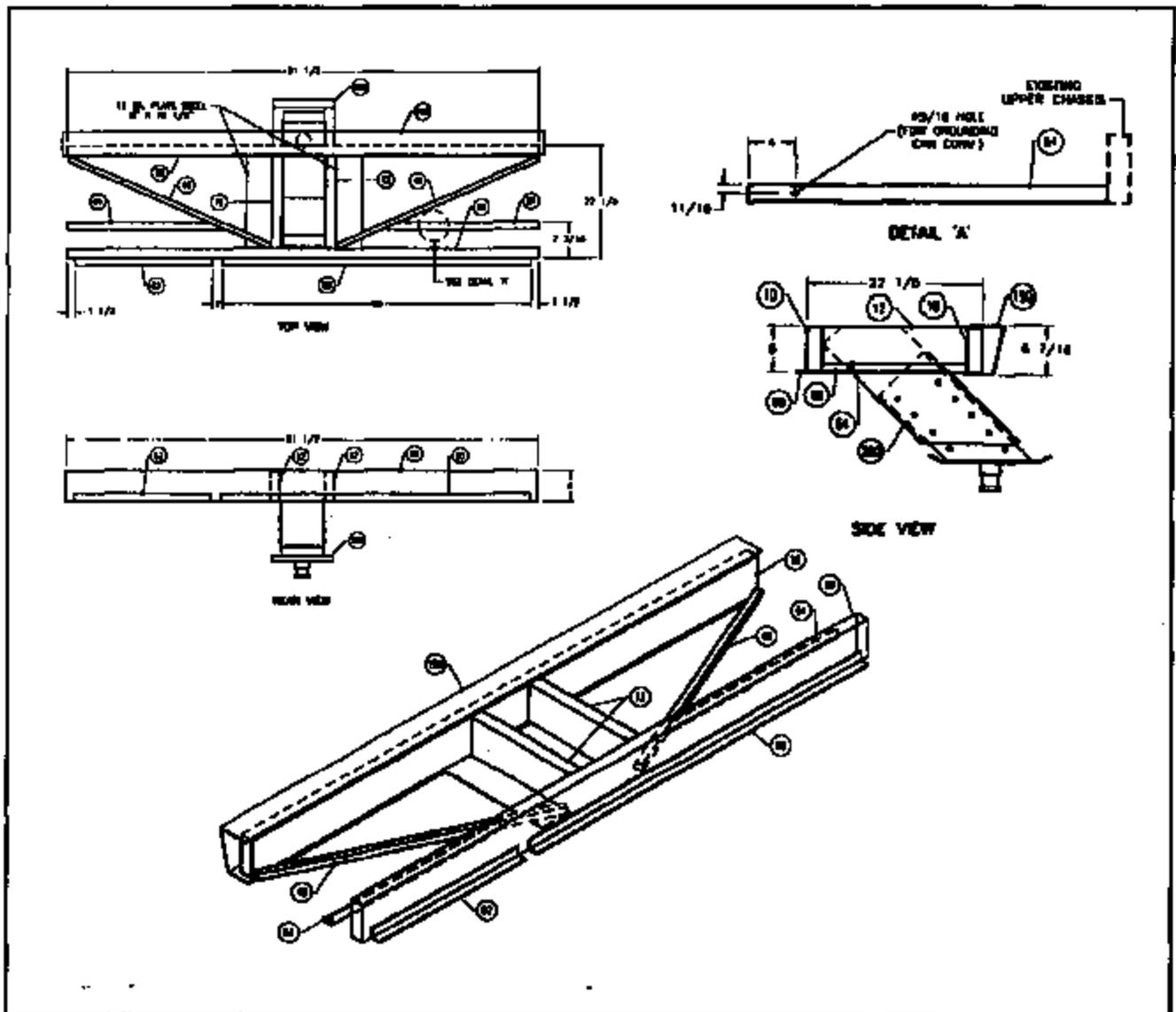


Figure 7

PRIOR AUTHORIZATION IS REQUIRED FOR THIS REPAIR 997-294 (15)**Use Flat Rate Code and Warranty Labor Allowance as follows:**

| | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------|-------|
| Expose, inspect, reinforce and repair upper chassis | 20.0 hrs. | 9066- |
| Replace crossmembers and pin box | 35.0 hrs | 9067- |

For this recall, add the correct suffix for each repair operation as follows:

- 11 Unit inspected, found not to be defective
- 12 Unit inspected, found defective, repaired
- 13 Unit inspected, found defective, owner declined repairs
- 14 Unit inspected, found defective, missing parts
- 15 Unit inspected, found defective, need tools to fix
- 16 Unable to notify customer
- 17 Customer unreachable