



U.S. Department  
of Transportation

**National Highway  
Traffic Safety  
Administration**

1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

MAY 25 2011

**CERTIFIED MAIL**  
**RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED**

Ronald W. Post  
Product Compliance Manager  
Winnebago Industries, Inc.  
605 W Crystal Lake Road  
Forest City, IA 50436

NVS-214tb  
PE10-048

Dear Mr. Post:

This letter is to inform you that, as part of the current Preliminary Evaluation, PE10-048, the Office of Defects Investigation (ODI) of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) is maintaining a surveillance program to further evaluate cracked / partially / completely fractured tow hitch assemblies installed as original equipment in model year 2005-2007 Winnebago recreational vehicles.

In order for my staff to evaluate this issue, ODI is requesting certain information regarding (1) Newly Reported Incidents; and (2) Recently Reported Incidents of cracked or fractured hitch assemblies.

**(1) Newly Reported Incidents-**

This letter requests Winnebago Industries, Inc. (Winnebago) to provide prompt reports to ODI of all newly reported incidents pertaining to cracked or fractured tow hitch assemblies that had been installed as original equipment in model years 2005-2007 Winnebago recreational vehicles.

ODI is requesting prompt notification of these incidents because there is a high likelihood that ODI would inspect the affected vehicle and/or relevant hitch components and would like to conduct any such inspections as soon as possible after the incident before components are discarded, lost, re-used, etc. by repairs to the hitch.

Accordingly, Winnebago must notify ODI within 48 hours when Winnebago learns of any cracked or fractured tow hitch assembly incident regardless of suspected cause or circumstances and whether or not confirmed.

This request is ongoing and terminates on **October 30, 2011**, but may be extended if circumstances warrant.

Each notification should be e-mailed to **t.bowman@dot.gov** (phone 202-366-2583). The notification should provide as much of the following incident information as possible. Timeliness is critical. Any of the requested information that is not immediately available at the time of initial incident notification must be provided as soon thereafter as it becomes available.

Each notification should, at a minimum, include the following information:

1. Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) of Winnebago towing vehicle;
2. Make of towing vehicle;
3. Model of towing vehicle
4. Model year of towing vehicle;
5. Build date of towing vehicle;
6. Owner's name;
7. Owner's address (number and street of residence);
8. Owner's city and state of residence;
9. Owner's phone number;
10. Date of incident;
11. Location of incident;
12. Whether any property damage, personal injuries, and/or fatalities are alleged to have resulted from the incident;
13. Current location of towing vehicle;
14. Current location of hitch or portions of hitch (if no longer attached to the towing vehicle);
15. The name of Winnebago's supplier of the hitch assembly installed in the incident vehicle;
16. Winnebago's part number for the hitch assembly installed in the towing vehicle; and
17. A brief description of incident.

**(2) Information Requested** : Recently Reported Incidents

In order to "back-fill" investigation files, ODI is also requesting that Winnebago provide the same information requested in the outline in the above section titled "Newly Reported Incidents" that have been received since February 1, 2011 --- the date at which Winnebago last provided ODI with a summary of complaints pertaining to cracked or fractured hitch assemblies --- to date.

Winnebago's response to this requested information must be submitted to this office by **June 20, 2011**.

Please refer to PE10-048 in Winnebago's response to this letter. If Winnebago finds that it is unable to provide all of the information requested within the time allotted, Winnebago must request an extension from me at (202) 366-6938 no later than five business days before the response due date. If Winnebago is unable to provide all of the information requested by the original deadline, it must submit a partial response by the original deadline with whatever information Winnebago then has available, even if an extension has been granted.

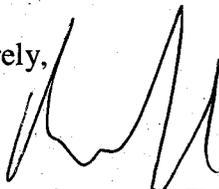
This letter is being sent to Winnebago pursuant to 49 U.S.C. § 30166, which authorizes NHTSA to conduct any investigation that may be necessary to enforce Chapter 301 of Title 49 and to request reports and the production of things. It constitutes a new request for information. Winnebago's failure to respond promptly and fully to this letter could subject Winnebago to civil penalties pursuant to 49 U.S.C. § 30165 or lead to an action for injunctive relief pursuant to 49 U.S.C. § 30163. (Other remedies and sanctions are available as well.) Please note that maximum civil penalties under 49 U.S.C. § 30165 have increased as a result of the recent enactment of the Transportation Recall Enhancement, Accountability, and Documentation (TREAD) Act, Public Law No. 106-414 (signed November 1, 2000). Section 5(a) of the TREAD Act, codified at 49 U.S.C. § 30165(b), provides for civil penalties of up to \$5,000 per day, with a maximum of \$15 million for a related series of violations, for failing or refusing to perform an act required under 49 U.S.C. § 30166. This includes failing to respond to ODI information requests.

If Winnebago cannot respond to any specific request or subpart(s) thereof, please state the reason why it is unable to do so. If on the basis of attorney-client, attorney work product, or other privilege, Winnebago does not submit one or more requested documents or items of information in response to this information request, Winnebago must provide a privilege log identifying each document or item withheld, and stating the date, subject or title, the name and position of the person(s) from, and the person(s) to whom it was sent, and the name and position of any other recipient (to include all carbon copies or blind carbon copies), the nature of that information or material, and the basis for the claim of privilege and why that privilege applies.

If Winnebago claims that any of the information or documents provided in response to this information request constitute confidential commercial material within the meaning of 5 U.S.C. § 552(b)(4), or are protected from disclosure pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 1905, Winnebago must submit supporting information together with the materials that are the subject of the confidentiality request, in accordance with 49 CFR Part 512, to the Office of Chief Counsel (NCC-113), National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Room W41-227, 1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E., Washington, D.C. 20590. Winnebago is required to submit two copies of the documents containing allegedly confidential information (except only one copy of blueprints) and one copy of the documents from which information claimed to be confidential has been deleted.

If you have any technical questions concerning this matter, please call Mr. Tom Bowman of my staff at (202) 366-2583.

Sincerely,



Bruce York, Acting Chief  
Medium and Heavy Duty Vehicle Division  
Office of Defects Investigation  
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration