



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**National Highway
Traffic Safety
Administration**

ODI RESUME

Investigation: PE 07-047
Date Opened: 09/14/2007
Principal Investigator: Tom Bowman
Subject: SAF Holland Simplex Fifth Wheels

Manufacturer: Freightliner LLC
Products: MY 2006-2008 Freightliner, Western Star & Sterling Tractors
Population: 38,000 (Estimated)

Problem Description: Trailer separation from towing tractor due to delayed or incomplete fifth wheel latching.

FAILURE REPORT SUMMARY

	ODI	Manufacturer	Total
Complaints:	0	0	0
Crashes/Fires:	0	0	0
Injury Incidents:	0	0	0
# Injuries:	0	0	0
Fatality Incidents:	0	0	0
# Fatalities:	0	0	0
Other*:	0	8	8

*Description of Other: 8 alleged partial or complete separations.

Action: Open a Preliminary Evaluation (PE).

Engineer: Thomas Bowman Date: 09/14/2007
Div. Chief: Richard Boyd MB Date: 09/14/2007
Office Dir.: Kathleen C. DeMeter Date: 09/14/2007

Summary: The lever arm pivot bolt installed in certain SAF Holland simplex fifth wheel assemblies manufactured between January 3, 2006, and May 16, 2007, may have been over-tightened. An over-tightened pivot bolt can distort the bolt spacer (sleeve) which might prevent the fifth wheel latch jaw from closing and latching securely around the trailer king pin. Unless detected by the driver when attaching the trailer to the tractor, an insecure fifth wheel latch could result in the trailer separating from the affected tractor when pulling from the loading area or while traveling on roadways.

SAF Holland has deployed a field service program (consisting of an owner advisory and repair kit) to address suspect assemblies. However, ODI believes that a trailer separation at highway speeds poses a risk to pedestrians and/or motorists in the vicinity of the separation. Due to these potential serious consequences, ODI is exploring whether Freightliner should conduct a safety campaign to notify vehicle owners and attempt to correct all vehicles which have not yet been remedied under the SFA Holland program.