



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

ODI RESUME

INVESTIGATION: PE02-019
SUBJECT: Electrical Vault Access Panel
PROMPTED BY: Field inspection
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: *Bob Young*

DATE CLOSED: 19-Apr-02

MANUFACTURER: Champion Bus, Inc.
MODEL: Contender
MODEL YEAR: 1999
VEHICLE POPULATION: 37

PROBLEM DESCRIPTION: The electrical vault access panel, located above and behind the driver's head, may inadvertently open and strike the driver.

REPORT SUMMARY

	ODI	MANUFACTURER	TOTAL
REPORTS:	1	1*	1
CRASHES:	0	0	0
NON-CRASH INJ:	1**	1*	1

*This duplicates ODI's report and includes the non-crash injury.

**ODI is aware of one alleged injury due to inadvertent access panel opening while a subject bus was being driven.

ACTION: No defect trend found. Close this Preliminary Evaluation (PE)

INVESTIGATOR: *[Signature]*
4-17-02
DATE

DIV CHF: *[Signature]*
4/18/02
DATE

OFC DIR: *[Signature]*
4/19/02
DATE

Summary: The subject access panel is retained by two hex-keyed rotary latches. These latches lack indexing making it difficult to determine whether they are in the locked position. If the latches are inadvertently left unlocked, the access panel may open and strike the driver's head.

On August 20, 1999, a DART (Delaware Transit) employee alleges she was injured when the access panel fell on her head during bus operation. Subsequent inspection by DART revealed that the rotary latches had not been secured. DART then modified both the involved bus and the remaining fourteen in its fleet by adding slide latches (see the attached photo).

Subsequently, DART ordered 22 Contender model Champions with the subject access panel secured by a piano hinge.

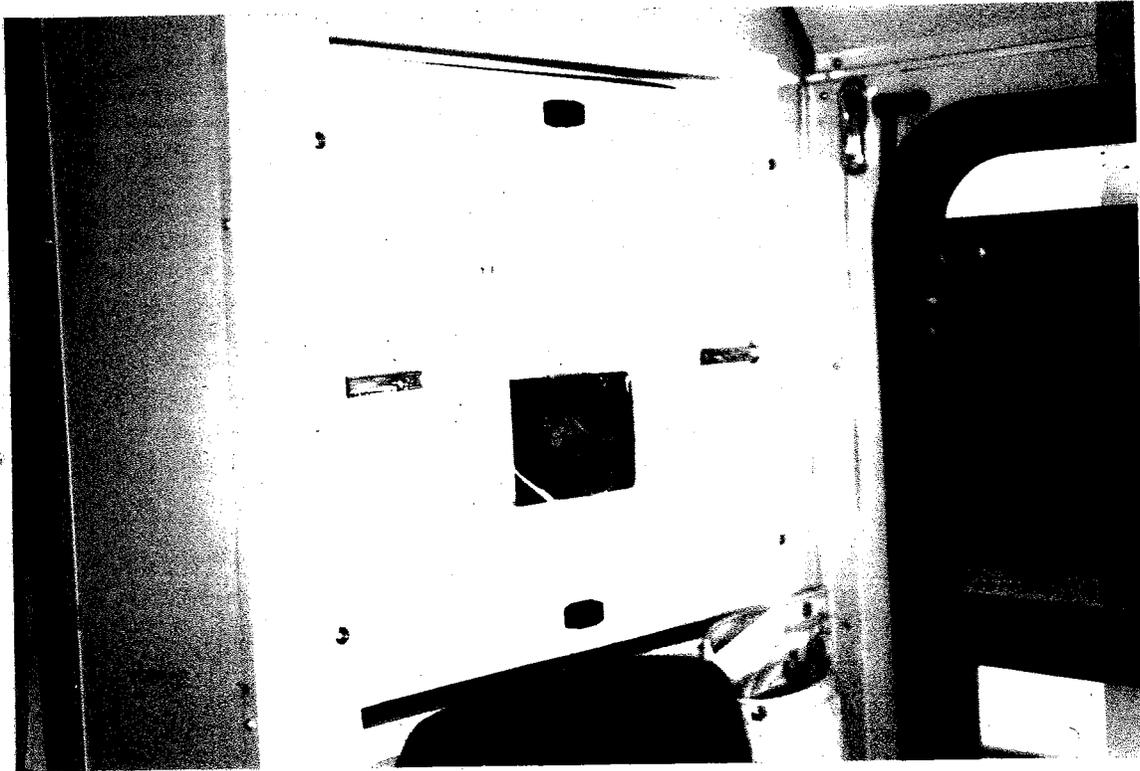
ODI has surveyed other fleets with 1998-2000 model year Contenders and confirmed Champion's claim that DART, alone, has buses with the subject access panel configuration.

In the absence of a defect trend, this PE is being closed.

JMS
4/22/02

NHTSA Photos

Champion Contender Access Panel



1. Subject access panel from VIN: 4VZYN7193XC029669. Note, the OEM latches are at 12:00 and 6:00. The latches at 9:00 and 3:00 were added by the fleet after this panel allegedly struck the driver's head.