

defect trends. The adjustment and claims rates are low in comparison to peer tires, and the incidence of injury crashes does not reflect a trend for any specific tire.

ODI analyzed all available data relating to the Decatur Steeltex R4S LT225/75R16 E tire installed on the lead plaintiff's motorhome. These tires were manufactured from 1995–1999 and were used as original equipment on some Ford full-size pick-up trucks and vans and sold as replacement tires. The tires were also frequently installed on Class C motorhomes on which overloading of an axle or specific wheel position is not unusual, which can contribute to tire failures. The warranty rates for these tires have been less than 0.1% from 1997 through 1999, and were never greater than 0.3%. There have been only two injury crashes associated with tread separations in these tires, both involving full-sized vans, and no fatalities.

As noted in PE00–040, the adjustment and claims tread separation rates for the subject tires are lower than those observed in peer LRE tires. This is true of the total population of subject tires, as well as individual tires analyzed by product code and assembly plant.

Discussion

The subject Steeltex tires, as defined in the Petition, represent an immense population of 39 million tires, manufactured over twelve years, and a wide variety of different tire line, size, load range, and plant combinations. The numbers of tread separation failures in those tires are functions of the large volume produced and the more severe service conditions associated with light truck radial tires, especially in the LRE category. Within this universe of experience, ODI identified a total of 54 crashes involving injury, resulting in 106 injuries and 13 deaths. Tread separation was alleged as the failure mode in 41 of these crashes, which were responsible for all of the deaths and 90 of the injuries.

These failures are distributed among a variety of different tires and assembly plants. About half of these incidents involve tires manufactured at the Joliette assembly plant, which is consistent with the number of subject tires produced there. Firestone's examination of some of the tires involved in these events has identified evidence of under-inflation, impact break, shoulder damage, un-repaired punctures, and improper repair. In addition, some of the tires that were sold as replacement tires were misapplied. While ODI has not been able to independently examine these tires, we note that the facts related to the

causes of many of these events are in dispute.

ODI has monitored its VOQ database since it closed PE00–040, to identify Steeltex complaints and any related injury reports. In general, ODI has seen a continued decline in the rate of complaints received since October 2000, despite the publicity related to the Petition and associated class action lawsuit.

To better analyze specific tire lines of interest, ODI examined property damage claim and warranty adjustment data furnished by Firestone. These data are both the largest bodies of failure data and the only data available that contain the specific tire identification information necessary to conduct detailed analyses by tire line and assembly plant. The overall Steeltex claims rate rose from 28 to 31 ppm between the closing of PE00–040 and the present, while the overall adjustment rate remained constant at 0.04%. Some individual tire populations had higher rates of adjustments and claims; however, none were as high as those of the competitor LRE tires examined by ODI.

ODI examined the material submitted by the Petitioners in an effort to identify tire failures and crashes involving injury that could indicate the presence of a safety-related defect trend. Within this material, there were reports of 115 additional tire failures beyond those considered in PE00–040. These included three injury crashes, which led to four (4) injuries. Therefore, the fundamental statistics concerning the performance of the subject tires have changed little since PE00–040 was closed.

Conclusion

Based on ODI's analysis of information submitted in support of the Petition and additional complaint and claims information received since the closing of PE00–040, it is unlikely that NHTSA would issue an order for the notification and remedy of a safety-related defect in the subject Steeltex tires at the conclusion of the investigation requested in the Petition. The statistics concerning the performance of these tires have changed little since the closing of PE00–040 and no specific defect trend has been identified. Therefore, in view of the need to allocate and prioritize NHTSA's limited resources to best accomplish the agency's safety mission, ODI has decided to deny the petition to reopen the Steeltex investigation. ODI will continue to monitor the performance of these tires for any signs that a defect trend may be developing.

Authority: 49 U.S.C. 30162(d); delegations of authority at CFR 1.50 and 501.8.

Issued on: June 11, 2003.

Kenneth N. Weinstein,

Associate Administrator for Enforcement.

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Research and Special Programs Administration

[Docket No. RSPA–2003–14307 (Notice No. 03–8)]

Notice of Information Collection Approval

AGENCY: Research and Special Programs Administration (RSPA), DOT.

ACTION: Notice of information collection approval.

SUMMARY: This notice announces Office of Management and Budget approval of information collection requests (ICRs), for OMB No. 2137–0559, “Rail Carriers and Tank Car Tank Requirements”; and OMB No. 2137–0051, “Rulemaking, Exemption, and Preemption Requirements.” These information collections have been extended until May 31, 2006.

DATES: The expiration date for these ICRs is May 31, 2006.

ADDRESSES: Requests for a copy of an information collection should be directed to Deborah Boothe or T. Glenn Foster, Office of Hazardous Materials Standards (DHM–10), Research and Special Programs Administration, Room 8102, 400 Seventh Street, SW., Washington, DC 20590–0001.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Deborah Boothe or T. Glenn Foster, Office of Hazardous Materials Standards (DHM–10), Research and Special Programs Administration, Room 8102, 400 Seventh Street, SW., Washington, DC 20590–0001, Telephone (202) 366–8553.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Office of Management and Budget (OMB) regulations (5 CFR 1320) implementing provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (P.L. 104–13) require that interested members of the public and affected agencies have an opportunity to comment on information collection and recordkeeping activities (see 5 CFR 1320.8(s)) and specify that no person is required to respond to an information collection unless it displays a valid OMB control number. In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, RSPA has received OMB approval of the following ICRs: