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ONE HUNDRED TENTH CONGRESS

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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February 14, 2008

Mr. Richard M. Lavers
Chief Executive Officer
Coachmen Industries, Inc.
P.O. Box 30
Middlebury, IN 46540

Dear Mr. Lavers:

I am writing regarding the Coachmen Industries, Inc., travel trailers sold to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) following the Gulf Coast hurricanes of 2005. These trailers were provided as housing by FEMA to victims of the hurricanes. At one time, over 100,000 trailers, including those manufactured by Coachmen, were being used as housing for victims of the hurricanes.¹ Currently, thousands of families in the Gulf Coast continue to live in the travel trailers and mobile homes manufactured by Coachmen and other companies.²

On July 19, 2007, the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform held a hearing as part of its investigation into dangerous levels of formaldehyde in the travel trailers and manufactured homes FEMA provided to victims of the Gulf Coast hurricanes. Through its investigation, the Oversight Committee learned that numerous travel trailers and manufactured homes tested by both FEMA and a non-profit organization had levels of formaldehyde much higher than the level at which adverse health effects begin to occur.³ Specific evidence obtained by the Committee indicates that travel trailers manufactured by Coachmen were included within this group.

In order to help the Oversight Committee understand how this situation developed, I request that you provide the Committee with information on the Coachmen travel trailers sold to

¹ Federal Emergency Management Agency: Frequently Requested National Statistics Hurricane Katrina—One Year Later (online at www.fema.gov/hazard/hurricane/2005katrina/anniversary.shtm) (accessed on January 17, 2008).

² Federal Emergency Management Agency, *Katrina and Rita Direct and Financial Assistance Housing Assistance Breakdown as of 09/25/07 (September 25, 2007)*.

³ Memorandum from Majority Staff to Members of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Full Committee Hearing on FEMA's Toxic Trailers (July 19, 2007).

FEMA following the Gulf Coast hurricanes of 2005. Specifically, I ask that Coachmen provide the Oversight Committee with the following:

1. All documents related to communications between Coachmen and FEMA regarding formaldehyde in the Coachmen travel trailers sold to FEMA following the Gulf Coast hurricanes of 2005;
2. All communications between Coachmen and any Coachmen subcontractor regarding formaldehyde in the Coachmen travel trailers sold to FEMA following the Gulf Coast hurricanes of 2005, including all communications regarding the use of formaldehyde in the manufacture process or any process used to decrease or minimize the levels of formaldehyde; and
3. All other documents related to formaldehyde in Coachmen travel trailers sold to FEMA following the Gulf Coast hurricanes of 2005.

Also, please provide the Oversight Committee with answers to the following questions:

1. How many travel trailers did Coachmen manufacture specifically for FEMA following the Gulf Coast hurricanes of 2005? What were the terms of the contract for the purchase of these travel trailers?
2. Was formaldehyde used in the production of the Coachmen travel trailers sold to FEMA following the Gulf Coast hurricanes of 2005? If so, how was formaldehyde used in the production of the travel trailers?
3. Why would a Coachmen travel trailer sold to FEMA following the Gulf Coast hurricanes of 2005 have high levels of formaldehyde?
4. What processes, if any, does Coachmen use to decrease or minimize the levels of formaldehyde in the travel trailers it produces? Were these processes used for the travel trailers sold to FEMA?
5. For the travel trailers sold to FEMA, did Coachmen voluntarily follow the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development's formaldehyde emission controls standard for wood products for manufactured homes?
6. Did Coachmen test the formaldehyde emissions of any travel trailer components or parts? If so, what were the results of these tests?
7. Were subcontractors used in the production of the travel trailers or manufactured homes sold to FEMA following the Gulf Coast hurricanes of 2005? If so, which companies

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were used as subcontractors and what component or part did each subcontractor manufacture? Was formaldehyde used in the manufacture of these components or parts? If so, which components or parts?


8. What actions has Coachmen taken in light of the elevated formaldehyde levels found in the travel trailers FEMA provided to Gulf Coast hurricane victims?

Please provide the Committee with the requested documents and answers by Friday, March 7, 2008.

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is the principal oversight committee in the House of Representatives and has broad oversight jurisdiction as set forth in House Rule X. An attachment to this letter provides additional information about how to respond to the Committee's request.

If you have any questions, please contact Erik Jones with the Committee staff at (202) 225-4407.

Sincerely,



Henry A. Waxman
Chairman

Enclosure

cc: Tom Davis
Ranking Minority Member