

ROADMASTER R4R AND RR4R CHASSIS SAFETY UPDATE

Several FMCA members have contacted *FMC* recently to report problems involving defective rear suspension trailing arms on motorhomes manufactured by the former Monaco Coach Corporation (MCC) and built on Roadmaster R4R and RR4R chassis equipped with the Monaco Gold (also known as R-Way) suspension. The problem does not involve any Roadmaster R4R and RR4R chassis that are equipped with Neway or Reyco suspensions. The members who contacted *FMC* owned motorhomes that had suffered cracked or broken rear trailing arms, causing the vehicle to handle poorly. A broken trailing arm also can cause additional damage to the suspension, driveshaft, and transmission and potentially could result in a vehicle crash.

This problem was first brought to light in February 2005 when MCC issued NHTSA recall 05V053000. The recall involved 2002 and 2003 model-year Holiday Rambler Ambassador and Monaco Knight motorhomes; 2002 through 2004 model-year Safari Sahara

and Zanzibar motorhomes; 2002 through 2005 model-year Holiday Rambler Neptune and Monaco Cayman motorhomes; and 2003 through 2005 Safari Cheetah motorhomes. These motorhomes were manufactured from November 30, 2001, through October 1, 2004. The total number of coaches involved was 2,827.

Initially, it was believed the problem was caused by a spacer plate under the trailing arms that included a transverse weld that was causing the trailing arms to crack. The recall remedy was to replace the trailing arms and U-bolts with re-engineered trailing arms of the same size provided by MCC.

However, this remedy did not solve the problem, according to Scott Zimmer, president of Source Manufacturing LLC in Elmira, Oregon. He said the real issue was that the trailing arms did not have sufficient strength to support the chassis' axle. As these trailing arms were put under stress during normal driving conditions, they would bend

and eventually develop a crack. Mr. Zimmer said that once a crack begins, it can grow fairly quickly. He noted that a visible crack could deteriorate to a full break in approximately 3,000 to 4,000 miles of travel, or even faster if undue stress, such as an emergency off-road driving situation or an extremely rough travel condition, was encountered.

To remedy this problem, Source Manufacturing has developed a specific trailing arm replacement kit to replace the stock trailing arms that were used on new motorhomes built on Roadmaster R4R and RR4R chassis equipped with Monaco Gold suspensions as well as the replacement trailing arms provided by MCC as a recall remedy and to repair other failures. The TRA-1003 suspension kit includes trailing arms that are much stouter

Owners of motorhomes built on Roadmaster R4R and RR4R chassis should have the rear trailing arms inspected immediately.

than the original equipment, weighing 130 pounds apiece compared to the 63-pound stock trailing arms. The new trailing arms have a black powder-coat finish to help resist corrosion and come with all of the necessary axle-mounting hardware for bolt-in installation by the repair facility.

Owners of motorhomes that were included in the previously mentioned recall but who did not have the problem addressed are advised to do so as soon as possible. In addition, those who already had their motorhome repaired under the recall or those who had replacement trailing arms installed at some point should have the rear suspension trailing arms re-inspected, as should anyone who owns a motorhome built on a Roadmaster R4R or RR4R chassis equipped with a Monaco Gold suspension. These chassis were used on certain model-year 2002 through 2009 Monaco, Holiday Rambler, Safari, and Beaver motorhomes, so even if your motorhome was not

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The stock trailing arms on the Monaco Gold suspension used on Roadmaster R4R and RR4R chassis (above left) are smaller and reportedly more susceptible to failure than the more substantial trailing arms (above right) included in the TRA-1003 suspension kit from Source Manufacturing.



included in the previous recall, it still may be equipped with the defective parts. If it was built on one of the affected chassis, have it inspected as soon as possible.

Unfortunately, this repair will not be made under the previous MCC recall, since the company is out of business. Also, the new Monaco RV LLC, owned by Navistar, did not assume the liabilities of MCC when it purchased certain assets from the company through bankruptcy proceedings. Therefore, it will not provide monetary support for this repair either.

So, it is up to the individual owner whose coach is built on a Roadmaster R4R or RR4R chassis equipped with a Monaco Gold suspension to have their motorhome's trailing arms inspected and replaced with the Source Manufacturing TRA-1003 suspension kit if necessary. This is a significant safety issue that can cause major damage to the motorhome and potentially lead to an accident should one or both trailing arms break while the motorhome is moving.

Besides alleviating the safety issue, an additional benefit that Mr. Zimmer said he has heard from owners who had the replacement kit installed on their motorhomes is that the ride and handling are much better than with the stock trailing arms. Because the replacement trailing arms are stiffer and do not bend as the stock trailing arms did, there is less bounce being generated by the wheels and axle, and the air bags riding atop the trailing arms are better able to cushion the ride.

Source Manufacturing has numerous authorized repair facilities throughout the United States that have the replacement kit in stock and can install the new parts in as few as eight to 10 hours. The replacement kit also can be purchased directly from Source Manufacturing for installation by other repair facilities. For more information or to locate the nearest authorized Source Manufacturing service facility, call (541) 935-0308 or visit www.source-1mfg.com. **FMC**

Even if your motorhome was not included in the previous recall, it still may be equipped with the defective parts.
