



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

DOT Auto Safety Hotline
Vehicle Owner's Questionnaire
TO REPORT VEHICLE SAFETY DEFECTS
1-888-DASH-2-DOT
(1-888-327-4236)
INTERNET: www.nhtsa.dot.gov/hotline

FOR AGENCY USE ONLY

Date Received

2003 APR 18 PM 12:25

Od or _____
rt dt _____
od rt _____
up ltr _____

Reference No.

10017160

OWNER INFORMATION (Type or Print)

Name _____
Street No. _____ Apt. No. _____
City Seabeck State WA Zip Code _____
Daytime Telephone Number _____

Do you authorize NHTSA to provide a copy of this report to the manufacturer of your vehicle? ☐ YES ☐ NO
In the absence of an authorization, NHTSA WILL NOT provide your name or address to the vehicle manufacturer.

Signature of Owner See attached letter to the manufacturer Date 4/18/03

PRODUCT INFORMATION

Vehicle Identification No. (VIN.) (17 Digits) <u>2T1LR3ZE73C054337</u>		Make <u>Toyota</u>	Model <u>Matrix/4PR</u>	Year <u>2003</u>
Purchased Date <u>8/24/02</u>	Dealer's Name <u>Heartland Toyota</u>		Engine Size (CID/CCL) <u>4</u>	☐ Turbo ☐ Diesel ☐ Gas ☐ Fuel Injection
☐ New ☐ Used	Dealer's City <u>Bremerton</u>	State <u>WA</u>	Zip Code <u>98312</u>	No. Cylinders <u>4</u>
Manufacture Date (on driver's door or pillar)	Transmission Type ☐ Manual ☒ Automatic	Restraint System ☒ Driver's Side Air Bag ☐ Motorbell ☒ Passenger's Side Air Bag ☐ 2-Point Belt ☒ 3-Point Belt	Cruise Control ☒ Yes ☐ No	Drivetrain ☐ Front ☐ Rear ☒ 4-Wheel
Vehicle Type ☐ Car ☐ Sport Utility ☐ Van ☐ Truck ☐ Minivan ☐ Motorcycle ☒ Other <u>CUV</u>		Body Style ☐ 2-Door ☐ 4-Door ☐ Station Wagon ☐ Pick Up Truck ☐ Other _____		

FAILED COMPONENT(S)/PART(S) INFORMATION

Part Name(s) <u>Parking Brake</u>	Location ☐ Left ☐ Right ☐ Front ☒ Rear	Failed Part(s) ☒ Original ☐ Replacement	Handicap Adaptive Equip ☐ Yes ☒ No
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TO BE COMPLETED WHEN REPORTING A TIRE FAILURE

Tire Brand	Tire Name	Complete Tire Size
No. of Failures	Date(s) of Failure(s) _____ Mileage at Failure(s) _____ Vehicle Speed at Failure(s) _____	Failed Part(s) Available? ☐ Yes ☐ No
		NHTSA Previously Contacted? ☐ Yes ☐ No

APPLICABLE INCIDENT INFORMATION

(Please describe in detail the incident(s), failure(s), crash(es), and injury(ies). Attach photos if available.)

Crash ☐ Yes ☒ No	Fire ☐ Yes ☒ No	Number of Persons Injured <u>0</u>	Number of Fatalities <u>0</u>	Reported to Manufacturer ☒ Yes ☐ No
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Narrative Description of Incident(s), Failure(s), Crash(es), and Injury(ies).

My wife drove the vehicle about 6 miles with the parking brake fully applied. There was no noticeable drag. I had a similar occurrence 3 months earlier but only drove about 90 feet.

Based on these incidents, the parking brake cannot be used in an emergency situation, such as engine stall or hydraulic brake failure. Accidents waiting to happen.

See attached letter for more information. This is the first car that I have owned in 52 years that performed in stated manner.

Continue on back.

The Privacy Act of 1974 - Public Law 93-579 This information is requested pursuant to 49 U.S.C. Chapter 301. You are under no obligation to respond to this questionnaire. Your response may be used to assist NHTSA in determining whether a manufacturer should take appropriate action to correct a safety defect. If NHTSA proceeds with administrative enforcement or litigation against a manufacturer, your response, or a statistical summary thereof, may be used in support of the agency's action.

22 Mar 2003

Toyota Customer Assistance Center
Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A., Inc
P.O. Box 2991
Torrance, CA 90509-2991

Subject: Safety concerns

We purchased a Toyota Matrix in August 2002, from Heartland Toyota in Bremerton WA, because of the many excellent features. I would be willing to enumerate them if you desire. Prior to my recent experience, I would concur with Consumer Research recommended buy of the Matrix in their April 2003 issue. I believe it would be an excellent choice if recommended changes were accomplished to the brake/brake warning systems and the automatic headlight control.

In December, I forgot to release the fully applied parking brake prior to stopping at the end of the driveway. As I was about to make a right turn, fortunately I noticed the brake warning light and released it. To my surprise, I did not notice any drag as I accelerated from my parking position; therefore, I had no clue that the brake was on. I forgot to include this concern in my list of questions for the first 3000-mile maintenance and service inspection on 2/10/03, so that the adjustment could have been checked.

Unfortunately, we made a costly mistake on 3/10/03 when my wife failed to release the fully applied parking brake and drove about 6 miles. Her first indication of a problem was a squealing sound and then she released the brake. I took the car to Heartland Toyota on 3/10/03 to inspect for damage and to see if it was safe to drive. When I arrived, I asked Bill Shelby to leave the parking brake fully on and put in gear to verify that there was hardly noticeable drag. He moved forward and backward about 6 feet easily. After inspection, I was told the parking brakes were properly adjusted and the repair caused by overheating would be \$580.42, including sales tax [see enclosure (1)]. I told Bill that I had driven over 750,000 miles in 52 years in many different vehicles and I have never been able to drive with the parking brake even only 50% on with out noticeable drag. This includes a 1990 Dodge van that I currently own and a 1994 Nissan pickup that I recently sold. I felt that I might have a lemon, considering that the battery was replaced 4 days after I accepted delivery. Bill said another owner of a light car, the Toyota Echo reported the same problem. I told him I would be disgusted if after repair, it didn't have a mechanical backup that would slow down and stop the vehicle in an emergency situation. My concern is for safety. He said that he couldn't do anything for me and provided an 800 number for me to call.

In several places, the manual cautions the operator to release the parking brake prior to driving. However, the customer is not adequately protected by the system design, specifically the poor location and display methodology of the brake warning light. It is located in the engine coolant temperature gauge, which is in the lower right corner and is the lowest instrument on the dash. The air bag steering wheel can obscure the driver's view. The seat and seat back position and steering wheel angle selected by the driver because of height, short waist, for comfort or easy entering/exiting effects this visibility. Also while driving due to the crown in the road, the steering wheel is turned slightly counter-clockwise; the brake light is not always visible. It is more likely to be visible if you turn the wheel clockwise as in my driving experience in December. (See paragraph 2.) In addition to location, the brake light is red and can be lost in the sea of red on the dash. All the instruments displays on the dash including the radio and ventilation controls are red. I like the red instrument panel, because it is more relaxing to my eyes at night; my wife doesn't agree. The major disadvantage is when you would want to call the driver's attention to an emergency situation by displaying a red light in the close proximity of a multitude of displays that are also red. The light should be relocated to the center instrument to ensure visibility and should flash similar to the seat belt warning light or be changed to a different color to draw the attention of the driver, or an audible sound as provided on some other vehicles.

The flashing feature is important for safety, to call the attention to the driver a more serious problem_ brake failure. Page 86 of the operating manual states that when that light comes on and the parking brake is off, "stop immediately". The Matrix has two separate sub-systems in the hydraulic brake system, which is a terrific safety feature. However the warning light "may come on" if either sub-system fails (page 174 of manual) leaves me to believe that the light would definitely come on only when both systems fail and I would have no brakes at all. I could not find any instructions on how to stop in case of this catastrophic hydraulic system failure. It also states, "if one sub-system fails the pedal is also harder to press, and your stopping distance will be longer". I was told during a phone call on 3/11/03 to the Customer Assistance Center (Case # 200303110637) that the parking brake was only to be used for parking and not designed as an emergency mechanical back on all Toyotas. I was advised to use engine braking as described on page 98 of the manual. It might be satisfactory in some optimum cases but I question the effectiveness in traffic that is slowing or stopping, a winding or steep descending road or approaching traffic control signs, lights or other dangerous situations. I am also concerned about the effectiveness of the brake system in emergency condition such as engine stalling and engine braking is not an option. It is possible that you would have to stop without power assist braking. It would be comforting to know that if necessary due to conditions as mentioned previously; I would be able to use the parking brake. I discussed my concerns with the dealers General Sales Manager on 3/18/03. A mechanical back-up for the hydraulic brake system is essential. Adequate instructions for stopping in these emergency conditions should be included in the manual in two sections: Before Driving Your Toyota and In Case of an Emergency.

The lighting system should be modified to permit over-riding the automatic feature that turns on the driving lights and then after about 5 seconds, the low beams if cloudy or dark. When entering a Military Base, a Washington State Ferry, or other security areas, they have requested that parking lights only be used. My daughter's 1999 Chevrolet pickup and my friends 1996 Lincoln both have similar automatic lights but do have an override feature, if needed.

Copy to: (less encl 1)
Toyota Motor Sales, Hopkins, MN
Heartland Toyota (attn: General Sales Manager)
Consumer Research
Washington State Attorney General

Respectfully,