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2005 SEP -9 AM 5: 18

August 30, 2005

NHTSA,
U. S. Department of Transportation
Washington, D.C. 20590

Re: Unexplained, pseudo-random surges in engine speed, 2004 Lexus LS 430,
VIN: JTHBN36F940 [REDACTED]

Sirs:

I took delivery of the referenced Lexus in May of 2004. During the winter of 2004, I noticed that the engine speed was quite high (over 1800 RPM) when the engine was first started at the ambient temperature ('cold'), typically 40 degrees. At first, the engine speed remained high until the engine had warmed up. As the weather warmed, I found that the engine speed would rise to the 1800 RPM level, drop to about 1100 RPM over a period of tens of seconds and then, about 50% of the time, suddenly jump back up to 1600-1700 RPM and remain at that speed. After that jump, there were further surges in engine speed as the transmission was shifted from 'Park' to 'Reverse'.

The vehicle design incorporates a 'Drive-by-wire' engine control system. There is no mechanical connection between the accelerator pedal and the engine throttle. All engine functions are controlled by a computer. I have video-taped this engine speed scenario with the climate control system and all other auxiliaries turned off.

In my opinion, such engine speed behavior is indicative of a defect that poses a potential safety problem. My concern is: given that the computer (or some other unidentified and uncontrolled influence) is causing engine speed surges without input from the vehicle operator, there is the threat that it will cause erratic behavior of the engine at times when a power surge may cause loss of control of the vehicle by the driver. I am reminded of the Audi 'unintended acceleration' phenomenon. Unless and until the cause of the surges is identified, there is no reason to believe that they will be limited in timing, magnitude or duration.

I have repeatedly brought this problem to the attention of the Lexus Customer Satisfaction department as well as a local dealership (Lawrence Lexus, Lawrenceville, N.J.) service department. I have shown the video tape recording of the engine speed to the dealership service personnel as well as to a Lexus Regional Manager (Brad). The service department had the vehicle for a full day without correcting or modifying the problem. When I later met with the Regional Manager (Aug.23, 2005) and showed the tape recording to him, his response was that this may be 'normal'. He suggested that I meet with a Lexus engineer at another time and that an appointment would be arranged. To date, I have received no notice of an appointment.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Belle Mead, N.J. [REDACTED]

cc: Kevin Hirai, Lexus Customer Satisfaction Dept, Torrance, CA 90509-2991

Ron Derry, Ser. Mgr., Lawrence Lexus, 2630 Business Route 1 North, Lawrenceville, N.J. 08648

Edison
9/15/05