



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 100148

Date Received

03-FEB-2006

Repository ☐

Reference No.
10149388

OWNER INFORMATION (Type or Print)

Name

Address

City

LADERA RANCH

State CA

Zip Code

Daytime Telephone Number

E-mail Address

Evening Telephone Number
SAME

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

Signature of Owner

Date 2/20/06

VEHICLE INFORMATION

17 digit Vehicle Identification Number Located at bottom of windshield on driver's side

JTKDE177450

Make

TOYOTA

Model

SCION TC

Model Year

2005

Date Purchased
19-JUN-05

Dealer's Name and Telephone Number
FAMILY TOYOTA 949-493-4100

Engine:

No: Cylinders 4

Fuel Type:

Gas

Original Owner
☒

Dealer's City
SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO

State
CA

Zip Code
92675

Transmission Type
MANUAL

☒ Antilock Brakes
☒ Cruise Control

Powertrain
FRONT WHEEL DRIVE

Vehicle Component Code

072200 FUEL SYSTEM, GASOLINE:DELIVERY:HOSES, LINES/PIPING,

Multiple Failure: 1

FAILED COMPONENT(S)/PART(S) INFORMATION

Incident Date(s)
13-JAN-2006

Failure Mileage
9200

Failure Speed
parked

ADDITIONAL ITEMS TO BE COMPLETED WHEN REPORTING A TIRE FAILURE

Tire Make

Tire Model (Name or Number)

Tire Size (Example P215/65R15)

DOT No. (Example: DOTM19ABC036)

☐ Original Equipment
☐ Prior Repair

Failure Location:

Tire Component Code

Tire Failure Type

ADDITIONAL ITEMS TO BE COMPLETED WHEN REPORTING A CHILD SEAT FAILURE

Make:

Date Manufactured:

Model No./Name:

Seat Type:

Installation System:

Child Seat Component Code:

Failed Part:

APPLICABLE INCIDENT INFORMATION

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

Crash

☐ Yes ☒ No

Fire

☒ Yes ☐ No

Number of Persons Injured

0

Number of Deaths

0

Reported to Police

N

Narrative Description of Incident(S), Crash(es), and Injury(ies).

Please describe (1) events leading up to the failure, (2) failure and its consequences, and (3) what was done to correct the failure; i.e. parts repaired or replaced (and if old part is available).

DT*: THE CONTACT STATED AFTER THE VEHICLE WAS PARKED, IT STARTED SMOKING FROM UNDER THE HOOD ON THE PASSENGER SIDE NEAR THE WINDSHIELD. THE FIRE DEPARTMENT WAS CALLED TO THE SCENE AND FILED A FIRE REPORT. THE FIRE MARSHAL DETERMINED THE CAUSE OF THE FIRE WAS A DEFECT IN THE FUEL LINE. THE DEALERSHIP AND MANUFACTURER WERE ALERTED.

Include, if available: Police/Fire Department Report, Photos, and Repair Invoice.

ATTACH ADDITIONAL SHEETS IF NECESSARY

The Privacy Act of 1974-Public Law 93-579 This information is requested pursuant to authority vested in the National Highway Traffic Safety Act and subsequent amendments. You are under no obligation to respond to this questionnaire. Your response may be used to assist the NHTSA in determining whether a Manufacturer should take appropriate action to correct a safety defect. If the 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.

Dear NHTSA,

2/28/06

I am sending you a copy of the Orange County Fire Authority report that we received concerning this vehicle fire. Someone from my husband's office ran outside with a video camera and taped the end process of the firemen putting out the fire and the fire fighter explaining to my son that the fire appeared to have been caused by a leak or break in the fuel line. The fireman on tape is [REDACTED] and he gave us a phone number of [REDACTED], if we needed to contact him. My husband has loaded a portion of that video on his computer, so he was able to email it to Troy Higa at Toyota Corporate in Torrance. We had been assigned to him in Toyota's Legal Dept. We could email the video to you too if it would be helpful or even burn a DVD and mail it to you. I am sending copies of a few of the letters of correspondence that we had with Toyota about this matter. We had only told them that the car suffered an underhood fire before their expert went to inspect the vehicle at the tow yard. We request that my son be able to meet the expert as he did his investigation, so my son could give him all the details of what he saw and get some personal items out of the glove box. We were told that it could be arranged that way, but actually the expert went to the tow yard and we were not notified until afterwards. Troy told us their expert said his investigation revealed that the fire started in the very front of the car near the bumper and wheel well and probably was caused by maybe a plastic trash bag or something getting sucked up off the road and catching on fire. There was no evidence of any trash bag or anything else but it seems to me a convenient excuse not to research further. We have since spoken to a mechanic who has experience working on Toyota Scions tc's that told us, "cars do suck up plastic bags off the road sometimes." "They melt and really stink, but they don't catch on fire." He also told my son that, "the Scion tc has a plastic fitting or connector that connects the fuel line in the area where [REDACTED] my son, described the fire starting." The mechanic said, "I can actually pull that fitting off with my fingers and don't even need a tool to remove it."

We were not successful in getting Toyota to help us in any way, even though my son had purchase their "Platinum 100,000 mile Warranty". We turned to our auto insurance company and now have been reimbursed for the loss. Mercury Insurance also sent an expert to investigate the vehicle and he actually called my son's cell phone and asked him questions while doing his investigation. He indicated to us that he thought the fire was started in the area of the fuel line also. I believe his name was Mike and he was with a group called "Hot Wire". Our claims adjuster from Mercury Casualty Co was Veronica Barragan. Her phone # (714)978-8515 ext.3158 She told us it would take approx two weeks for her to get that report from their expert. Maybe you can contact her and get any info you need. Our claim number from Mercury was CLAIM# [REDACTED].

We have the contact info for an eyewitness who saw the fire before my son did. Please let us know if you need any further info from us. We just want to make you aware of this incident to prevent another family from going through a possible tragedy if it is preventable.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

ORANGE COUNTY FIRE AUTHORITY
1 Fire Authority Road
Irvine, CA 92602
714-573-6000
1-800-545-5585
OFFICIAL INCIDENT REPORT

Incident: 2006-0002990-000

Incident	0002990-000
Incident Date	01/13/2006
Incident Status	Closed
Alarm Time	01/13/2006 15:02:32
Arrival Time	01/13/2006 15:08:09
Controlled Time	01/13/2006 00:00:00
Cleared Time	01/13/2006 15:40:59
Incident Type	131 - Passenger vehicle fire
Shift	A
Station	FS09
Alarms	1
District	5353Y
Mutual Aid	N - None
Actions Taken 1	11 - Extinguishment by fire service personnel
Actions Taken 2	12 - Salvage & overhaul

Location: 2006-0002990-000

Location Type	1 - Street Address
Directions	NEAR CROWN VALLEY PY
Address	27451 LOS ALTOS
City	MISSION VIEJO
State	CA
Zipcode	92691
Census Tract	58
Property Use	965 - Vehicle parking area
Estimated Property Loss	21,000.00
Estimated Content Loss	200.00

Resources: 2006-0002990-000

Unit T9

Responsible for full Report	Yes
Main Use	3 - Other
Unit Type	12 - Truck or aerial
Number of Personnel	4
Actions Taken 1	11 - Extinguishment by fire service personnel
Actions Taken 2	12 - Salvage & overhaul
From quarters	Yes
Dispatch Time	01/13/2006 15:02:32
Enroute Time	01/13/2006 15:03:36
Arrival Time	01/13/2006 15:08:09
Clear Time	01/13/2006 15:40:28
Reporting Member	0623 GOBROGGE ROY H
Assignment Date	01/16/2006

Incident Narrative

At 1502 hours on Friday, January 13, 2006 we were dispatched to a passenger vehicle fire. One unit was assigned to this incident. Four personnel responded. We arrived on scene at 1508 hours and cleared at 1540 hours. The incident occurred at 27451 LOS ALTOS MISSION VIEJO CA in District 5353Y. The local station is FS09. The general description of this property is vehicle parking area. The primary task(s) performed at the scene by responding personnel was extinguishment. No mutual/automatic aid was given or received.

Narrative

"Engine area, running gear, wheel area" best describes the primary use of the room or space where the fire originated. "Radiated, conducted heat from operating equipment" best describes the heat source that caused the ignition. Failure of equipment or heat source caused the ignition. Equipment was involved in the ignition of this fire. The material first ignited was "gasoline". The use, or purpose of the material that was first ignited was "flammable liquid/gas - in/from engine or burner". "Leak or break" contributed to the ignition of the fire.

The material contributing most to flame spread was "gasoline". The use, or purpose of the contributing material was "flammable liquid/gas - in/from engine or burner".

The estimated property loss on this incident was \$21,000.00. The estimated content loss was \$200.00.

Alarm number 0002990 has been assigned to this incident. VEHICLE ENGINE COMPARTMENT WELL INVOLVED UPON ARRIVAL. BELIEVE TO HAVE STARTED FROM POSSIBLE FUEL LINE LEAK

Unit Narrative

At 1502 hours

on Friday, January 13, 2006 Unit T9 was dispatched to a passenger vehicle fire. Four personnel responded. We arrived on scene at 1508 hours and cleared at 1540 hours. The primary task(s) performed at the scene by responding personnel was extinguishment.

Personnel on Unit T9

Unit Member	0623 GOBROGGE ROY H
Unit Member	0571 CONROY MICHAEL E
Unit Member	3934 CRARY PETER
Unit Member	4678 ABNEY BRIAN

Fire: 2006-0002990-000

Property & Ignition

Cause of Ignition	3 - Failure of equipment or heat source
Area of Origin	83 - Engine area, running gear, wheel area
Heat Source	12 - Radiated, conducted heat from operating equipment
Item First Ignited	62 - Flammable liquid/gas - in/from engine or burner
Type of Material First Ignited	23 - Gasoline
Factor Contributing to Ignition	23 - Leak or break

Mobile Property Involved in Ignition

Ignition	3 - Involved in ignition and burned
Type	11 - Automobile, passenger car, ambulance, race car
Make	TO - Toyota
Model	SCION
Year	2006
License	5PBA129
State	CA
VIN	JTKDE177450

Human Factors Contributing to Ignition

Asleep	No
Possible impaired by alcohol or drugs	No

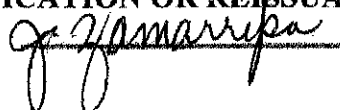
Unattended Person	No
Possibly mentally disabled	No
Possibly physically disabled	No
Multiple persons Involved	No
Age was factor	No

Building: 2006-0002990-000

**ORANGE COUNTY FIRE AUTHORITY
OFFICIAL CONTROLLED DOCUMENT**

DUPLICATION OR REISSUANCE CONTROLLED BY LAW

Released By



Copy of letter
I sent to Mr Higa
in Toyota Corp-
Legal Dept

2/6/06

Dear Mr. Higa,

This letter is in response to your letter to my husband of Feb. 2, 2006, regarding your lone engineer making a decision about our son's car fire. You said your engineer has had many years of vehicle fire investigation experience. I wonder if his opinion could be in any way influenced by the fact that your company pays to have him do these investigations. I don't consider his conclusions to be valid because he did not have all the facts available.

We have a police officer who was in attendance at the fire who told my son, "don't worry this fire is obviously the cause of some kind of manufacturer defect and you are covered by a warranty. Calm down, everything will be fine and I'm sure Toyota will replace your car." Four firemen told us on the spot and one was even video taped saying, "This fire appears to be caused by a leak or break in the fuel line. My son, [REDACTED] told us that he saw smoke coming from his car when he exited my husband's office building after dropping off something. He ran over to his car and saw low flames and was going to try to open the car when another man in the parking lot called to him to "get back." He went to where the man was standing and the man told him to call 911. He did call 911. This witness came over to us after the firemen had finished putting the fire out and said he saw the fire when it started and he gave us his name and contact info if we needed his testimony. Both he and [REDACTED] said the flames started from under the hood near the windshield wiper area on the passenger side of the car and then they grew to 10 feet high flames. The flames were not in the front of the car originally or wheel area as your engineer has reported to you. We have since talked to a mechanic ourselves who told us the plastic shopping bag theory is ridiculous. This mechanic said he removes plastic bags all the time because customers bring in cars, complaining of a bad smell. This mechanic said, "plastic bags melt and smell bad, they don't cause big flames." I thought we would have had an opportunity to explain all of these details to you, "Troy," as Toyota conducted a more thorough investigation to be sure this type of fire doesn't ruin some other young persons car or burn or kill someone. We have contacted our Auto Insurance Company now as our only recourse and are awaiting an offer to replace the vehicle. Of course, they will not refund us for the \$300.00 loss of personal items in the car or the \$1098.00 spent for the Toyota 100,000 mile extended "Platinum warranty."

Last Friday I called to report this car fire to the National Highway Traffic and Safety Administration. I was told that they will be conducting their own investigation. We plan to make this information available to the public "on line" and in the media to make the general public aware so some action can be taken to be sure this problem is addressed. My husband found himself sitting in traffic today next to a young lady in a black Scion tc and told me he felt afraid for her safety due to our experience with what appears to be the "cavalier" attitude Toyota has taken concerning our experience. Since you are the only person at Toyota who will correspond with us, other than, Gina, our original customers service rep., the reputation of how Toyota treats a customer who loses their car to a catastrophic fire rests on your shoulders. As my husband told you before, we are

currently driving our third Lexus. We have an LS430 and love it. We had become loyal Toyota product fans. Now we have changed our opinion. He drove to Torrance last week to try to talk to someone else at your corporate headquarters who could be another contact within your company to review this car fire and investigate further than you have been willing to proceed. He was treated rudely and turned away. We are very disappointed in the way Toyota has handled this investigation. We understand the reticence of your company to accept any responsibility because this might trigger a recall. We since have searched and found two other mentions "on line" about Scion engine fires. No car manufacturer wants the expense or publicity of a recall, but what about the lives of the people driving these cars. If this is a defect in the fuel line many people's lives are in danger. After the under hood fire destroyed my sons car, we contacted a mechanic who works on Scions and he told us that the fuel line on the Scion has a plastic fitting in the area where we told him the fire was coming from. He said he can even remove this fitting with just his two fingers and he thinks there may have been a problem in that fitting that caused the fuel fire. Please reconsider further action to insure that this type of under hood fire does not occur again.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

TOYOTA

Writers Direct Telephone (310) 468-5638
Writers Direct Fax (310) 381-5017

Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A., Inc.
19001 South Western Avenue
Torrance, CA 90501
(310) 468-4000

January 23, 2006

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
LADERA RANCH CA [REDACTED]

Re: Date of Loss: January 13, 2006
Vehicle: 2006 Scion tC
VIN: JTKDE177450 [REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]:

Toyota Motor Sales, USA Inc. ("TMS") has completed its technical inspection of your vehicle. This letter follows my telephone conversation with your father, David, this afternoon.

While there was a fire to the engine compartment of your vehicle, there is no indication that the cause of the fire was due to any sort of defect. There was no evidence of mechanical or electrical failure or defect.

We are sorry to learn of this unfortunate incident, however, TMS has determined that this fire was not due to manufacturer or design defect, and we are therefore unable to offer assistance. We trust your insurance company will properly compensate you for this loss, thereby fulfilling their contractual obligation to you.

Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to review your claim.

Very truly yours,



Troy H. Higa
Claims Administrator
Legal Department

TOYOTA

Writers Direct Telephone (310) 468-5638
Writers Direct Fax (310) 381-5017

Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A., Inc.
19001 South Western Avenue
Torrance, CA 90501
(310) 468-4000

January 26, 2006

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
LADERA RANCH CA [REDACTED]

Re: Customer: [REDACTED]
Date of Loss: January 13, 2006
Vehicle: 2006 Scion tC
VIN: JTKDE177450 [REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

I received your e-mail of January 25, 2006, with which you also sent the Orange County Fire Authority report pertaining to the vehicle fire as captioned. Thank you for sending that to me.

You state that you feel that this is a warranty issue stemming from equipment failure. As I notified Shawn in my letter of January 23, 2006, our technical inspection of the fire revealed no evidence of mechanical or electrical failure or defect, so we do not agree that this is a warrantable loss. The mere fact that there was an engine fire does not automatically mean that it was due to a defect, as there are other factors that could lead to a vehicle fire.

With respect to the Fire Authority report that the fire was due to failure involving the gasoline, while gasoline would have certainly added fuel to the fire (no pun intended), we question how they can determine that a fuel leak was the cause of the fire.

We again are very sorry that you and your son were subjected to this incident, but as we previously stated, our investigation did not reveal a manufacturer or design defect. If you or your insurance company has additional information that you would care to submit to us for review, we will gladly do so.

Thank you for your attention and understanding.

Very truly yours,



Troy H. Higa
Claims Administrator
Legal Department