

[REDACTED]
Carson City, Nevada [REDACTED]

2006 MAR 20 PM 12:25 ch, 17, 2006

Office of Defects Investigation
U.S. Department of Transportation
Washington, D.C. 20590
(400 7th St., SW)

10/54/43

Gentlemen,

Re: Hazardous Door Lock Defects. Toyota Sedans

I have a 1996 Toyota Camry 4-door sedan. I bought it new around 4/24/96. Its vehicle number is: 4T1BG12K1T [REDACTED]. On 2/13/06, around 30 miles from home, I locked the car. When I got back the door on the driver's side could not be opened from either the outside nor the inside. (Although I am in my eighties, I fortunately am still able to get into the driver's seat via the passenger door. I know of many individuals who would have been unable to do so!) It turned out that a spring in the door lock assembly had broken. The Toyota dealer had to install a new door lock assembly (at my cost). I still have the old assembly with the broken spring.)

I consider the poorly designed door lock assembly with the inferior spring a safety hazard. It could have happened to someone on one of our desert roads during the summer; to someone physically unable to get to the driver's seat. With water and other supplies inside the car such an individual could die before someone else would get to him. (One would leave cell phones, etc. in the car when one goes for a stroll in the deserts.) It seems the door lock defect is not extremely rare. The dealer had spare lock assemblies in stock and one of the service managers could promptly identify the reason for the problem. I sort of expect other car models and other car makers used similar door lock assemblies from the same supplier..

An acquaintance of mine lost his family when they could not get out of their vehicle because the car battery had shorted out. Thus the electric motor driven door and windows could not be opened. (As far as I am concerned, these are just not very useful gadgets which tend to have problems.) I do have to place special orders to get vehicles without such dangerous items I do not want.

At the time of the door spring lock break the vehicle had around 84,320 miles. Except for the garage mechanics, I have driven all the miles and the dealer did the maintenance items.

Sincerely,
[REDACTED]

Cc: Toyota Motor Sales USA, Inc.
Customer Assistance Center
Department H200

19001 S. Western Ave.

~~Torrance, CA 90509~~

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Edman
3/29/06