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January 21, 2007

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[REDACTED]
Columbia, SC [REDACTED]

NHTSA
Office of Defects Investigations/CRD
NVS-216
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

To Whom It May Concern:

I have serious concerns about the safety of the door lock system in my 2007 Toyota Camry, LE. I find it a potentially serious safety hazard. There are two lock configurations which are both potentially dangerous.

1. When you turn off the car all the doors immediately unlock.
2. When you turn off the car the doors will stay locked, but only until you open the driver's side door. When you open the drivers side door all other doors become unlocked.

Both of these choices are unacceptable. It leaves you vulnerable to anyone with ill intentions. I maintain that a carjacker, robber, kidnapper, etc. could jerk open the unlocked door on the opposite of the car and gain control, grab a purse, a package or person. Sadly we must think of these possibilities in this day and age.

I do not want all doors to automatically unlock unless the appropriate button is pressed to do so. It is safer when the driver or individual passenger can control door locks as needed. Of course child locks are a necessary feature.

I sent a letter to Toyota (see attached) about this concern and got a call from a representative but it was not reassuring.

Your investigation and opinions on this issue be greatly appreciated. Thank you in advance for your timely response.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

attachment: letter to Toyota

ET
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KB

September 15, 2007


Columbia, SC 

Toyota's Customer Experience Center
Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A. Inc.
19001 South Western Ave.
Dept. WC11
Torrance, CA 90501

To whom it may concern:

This letter is to voice some concerns about a 2007 Toyota Camry, LE purchased in June, 2007. We have been driving Toyota's exclusively for nearly 20 years and have been very satisfied and loyal customers. However, the most recent Camry has given us cause to wonder if we shouldn't try another car next time.

The new Camry has a few features that I do not see as an improvement. One feature is actually a safety issue. I question the automatic locking system. There are only two configurations and neither is acceptable. When opening the driver's side door I do not want all the doors to automatically unlock. When turning off the car I do not want all the doors to automatically unlock. In this day and age that can be dangerous. A hijacker or purse snatcher could immediately open the door and cause a lot of problems. I liked Camrys that allow the driver as well as each passenger to control their own door. Of course child lock option is a good feature.

Other points are only aggravations. I find the Camry has slow pick up from a stop. Also unsettling is the obvious feeling of shifting gears as I coast down some roads. I assume that this is probably to add fuel efficiency but wondering how much it really saves. Another aggravating feature is the parking brake being located back down on the floor. This is like going back in time. What in the world is good about this? Were they trying to go "retro"?

A good friend recently approached a Toyota representative at an automotive convention and passed along my concerns. The representative said, "We gear our cars to please the majority." That sounds like a pat answer given to hopefully pacify customers with criticisms about the car. First of all, I am willing to bet that the majority of Camry drivers are women. I recently read where "Women purchase 65% of new cars, 53% of used cars and influence up to 95% of all vehicles purchased." (Pam Barker, Ward's Dealer Business magazine.) I admit this may not be exclusive for Toyota but it shows the purchasing power and involvement of women. Most women want safety at traffic in parking lots...i.e. the ability to control all locks on doors to avoid problems mentioned above. I would assume men would want the same.

Your comments on this will be greatly appreciated.

Thank you.

