



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

**INFORMATION Redacted PURSUANT TO THE FREEDOM OF
INFORMATION ACT (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. 552(B)(6)**

Administrator

1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20590

June 9, 2010

The Honorable Adam B. Schiff
Member, U.S. House of Representatives
87 North Raymond Avenue, Suite 800
Pasadena, CA 91103

NVS-216 et
Ref. No. 10320886

Dear Congressman Schiff:

Thank you for your correspondence dated February 26 on behalf of your constituent, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] wrote concerning the problems his wife encountered with a model year (MY) 2005 Toyota Prius that they previously owned. Your correspondence was received on March 16.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) is the Federal agency responsible for improving safety on our Nation's highways. We are authorized to order manufacturers to recall and repair vehicles or items of motor vehicle equipment when our investigations indicate that they contain safety defects in their design, construction, or performance. In order for the agency to initiate an investigation, we look carefully at the body of consumer complaints and other available data to determine whether a defect may exist.

We appreciate the report you provided on behalf of [REDACTED]. Reports from motorists are a very important source of information for us. [REDACTED] indicated that while his wife attempted to park their MY 2005 Toyota Prius in a parking garage, the vehicle suddenly accelerated and plunged from the 3rd floor to the 2nd floor of the parking garage. [REDACTED] also mentioned that on at least one occasion the vehicle automatically started up without the presence of a key in the ignition.

We are sorry to hear of this incident and the emotional trauma [REDACTED] wife suffered. In October 2009, Toyota announced the recall of 3.8 million vehicles, including the MY 2005 Toyota Prius, for accelerator pedal entrapment by the floor mat (NHTSA Recall Campaign No. 09V-388). That recall was recently expanded and now includes almost 5.4 million vehicles (NHTSA Recall Campaign No. 10V-023). When an accelerator pedal is depressed to, or almost to, the floor, as is done during attempts to merge onto a freeway or pass another vehicle at highway speeds, it can



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become trapped in the fully open position by an out of position or unsecured floor mat. Only an expert in crash reconstruction could have provided an educated opinion as to whether the accelerator pedal was entrapped by a floor mat and caused the crash of [REDACTED] MY 2005 Toyota Prius.

With regard to [REDACTED] complaint that the vehicle automatically started up without the presence of a key in the ignition, we have reviewed our database in an effort to identify whether a safety defect trend exists with regard to this problem in MY 2005 Toyota Prius vehicles. At this time, there is insufficient evidence to warrant opening a safety defect investigation. The information you provided has been entered into our database. It will be considered with future reports to identify any safety defect trends that may require our attention.

NHTSA is now undertaking a comprehensive look into the safety of electronic throttle control (ETC) systems in all vehicles sold in the United States equipped with that technology. The prestigious National Academy of Sciences (NAS) will examine the broad subject of unintended acceleration and electronic vehicle controls across the entire automotive industry. Separately, NHTSA has enlisted National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) scientists with expertise in areas such as computer controlled electronic systems, electromagnetic interference, and software integrity to examine the issue of unintended acceleration specifically in Toyota vehicles.

NAS, which includes the National Research Council, will examine the broad subject of unintended acceleration and electronic vehicle controls across the entire industry over the course of 15 months. This will not be limited to Toyota, but will cover all vehicle manufacturers. A panel of experts will review possible sources of unintended acceleration, including electronic vehicle controls, human error, mechanical failure and interference with accelerator systems. The experts will look at software, computer hardware design, electromagnetic compatibility and electromagnetic interference. The panel will make recommendations to NHTSA on how its rulemaking, research, and defects investigation activities may help to enhance the safety of electronic control systems in motor vehicles.

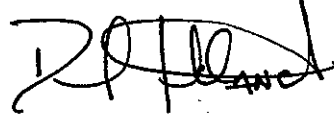
The NHTSA review of the ETC systems in Toyota vehicles is to be completed by late summer. NHTSA has brought in NASA engineers and other experts in subjects such as electromagnetic compatibility as part of a shorter-term review of these systems used in Toyota vehicles to determine whether they contain any possible flaws that would warrant a defect investigation. NASA's expertise in electronics, hardware, software, hazard analysis and complex problem solving ensures this review will be comprehensive. If either study should identify a potential safety-related defect, an investigation could be opened.

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I hope this information is helpful. If you have any questions, please have your staff contact me or Mr. Daniel C. Smith, NHTSA's Associate Administrator for Enforcement, at (202) 366-3217.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Strickland", with a stylized flourish at the end.

David L. Strickland

cc: Washington Office