U.S. Department
of Transportation

**National Highway
Traffic Safety
Administration**

1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

May 18, 2011

[redacted]
Atlanta, GA [redacted]

NVS-216 et
Ref. No.10326417

Dear [redacted]

Thank you for your correspondence concerning your model year (MY) 2004 Lexus vehicle. The Georgia Governor's Office of Consumer Affairs referred your letter to us. Due to the unprecedented amount of correspondence received by this office last year, we are now just getting to your letter. Please accept our apologies for this delay.

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 motor vehicle equipment when our investigations indicate that they contain safety defects in their design, construction, or performance. We also monitor the adequacy of manufacturers' recall campaigns. 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 cannot act on isolated problems or resolve disputes between individual owners, dealers, or manufacturers.

We appreciate the report you provided. Reports from motorists are a very important source of information for us. In your letter you indicate experiencing unintended acceleration in you MY 2000 Lexus vehicle (that resulted in a crash). The United States Department of Transportation released results from an unprecedented ten-month study of potential causes of unintended acceleration in Toyota vehicles. NHTSA launched the study last spring at the request of Congress, and enlisted National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) engineers with expertise in areas such as computer controlled electronic systems, electromagnetic interference and software integrity to conduct research into whether electronic systems or electromagnetic interference played a role in incidents of unintended acceleration.

NASA engineers found no electronic flaws in Toyota vehicles capable of producing the large throttle openings required to create dangerous high-speed unintended acceleration incidents. The two mechanical safety defects identified by NHTSA more than a year ago - "sticking" accelerator pedals and design flaws that enable accelerator pedals to become trapped remain the only known causes for these kinds of unsafe unintended acceleration incidents. Toyota has recalled slightly more than 10 million vehicles in the United States for these two safety defects.

In completing their report, NASA engineers evaluated the electronic circuitry in Toyota vehicles and analyzed more than 280,000 lines of software code for any potential flaws that could initiate an unintended acceleration incident. At the Goddard Space Flight Center in Maryland, NASA hardware and systems engineers rigorously examined and tested mechanical components of Toyota vehicles that could result in an unwanted throttle opening. At a special facility in Michigan, NHTSA and NASA engineers bombarded vehicles with electromagnetic radiation to study whether such radiation could cause malfunctions resulting in unintended acceleration. NHTSA engineers and researchers also tested Toyota vehicles at NHTSA's Vehicle Research and Test Center in East Liberty, Ohio to determine whether there were any additional mechanical causes for unintended acceleration and whether any of the test scenarios developed during the NHTSA-NASA investigation could actually occur in real-world conditions.

While NASA and NHTSA have identified no electronic cause of dangerous unintended acceleration incidents in Toyota vehicles or any new mechanical causes beyond sticking pedals and accelerator pedal entrapment, NHTSA is considering taking several new actions as the result of these findings, including:

- Propose rules to require brake override systems, to standardize operation of keyless ignition systems, and to require the installation of event data recorders in all passenger vehicles;

- Initiate broad research on the reliability and security of electronic control systems;

- Initiate the placement and design of accelerator and brake pedals, as well as driver usage of pedals, to determine whether design and placement can be improved to reduce pedal misapplication.

Based on objective event data recorder (EDR) readings and crash investigations conducted as part of NHTSA's report, NHTSA is researching whether better placement and design of accelerator and brake pedals can reduce pedal misapplication, which occurs in vehicles across the industry. NHTSA's forthcoming rulemaking to require brake override systems in all passenger vehicles will further help ensure that braking can take precedence over the accelerator pedal in emergency situations.

NHTSA and NASA will also brief the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) panel currently conducting a broad review of unintended acceleration and electronic throttle control systems. The ongoing NAS study, which will examine unintended acceleration and electronic vehicle controls across the entire automotive industry, will also make recommendations to NHTSA. The NAS study was launched in spring 2010 alongside the NHTSA-NASA investigation and will be finalized later in 2011.

Since 2009, Toyota recalled slightly more than 10 million vehicles as part of the sticky pedal and pedal entrapment recalls. Toyota also paid $48.8 million in civil penalties as the result of NHTSA investigations into the timeliness of several safety recalls last year. Across the industry, automakers voluntarily initiated a record number of safety recalls in 2010.

Should you encounter a safety-related problem with a motor vehicle or item of motor vehicle equipment in the future, we would appreciate it if you would complete an electronic Vehicle Owner's Questionnaire online at www.nhtsa.dot.gov/ivoq or call the Auto Safety Hotline at 1-888-327-4236. Also, the NHTSA Executive Summary and NHTSA Full Report for the NHTSA-NASA investigation can be located online at www.nhtsa.dot.gov.

Sincerely,

Randy Reid

Randy Reid, Chief
Correspondence Research Division
Office of Defects Investigation
Enforcement