

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

Subject: FW: Toyota Catalytic Converter on 2003 Toyota Matrix
Date: Wednesday, September 22, 2010 3:49:29 PM
Attachments: [Toyota catalytic converter.doc](#)

[REDACTED]
Austin, TX
[REDACTED]

August 30, 2010

Dear Senator Doggett:

On June 15, 2010, my catalytic converter on a 2003 Toyota Matrix (purchased 2/2003) burned out at 80,743 miles, which I discovered when my check-engine light appeared in Moline, Illinois, as I was on a trip to Minnesota. I immediately went to Hiland Toyota Scion in Moline. Since it was so few miles over the 80,000 mile warranty, Peter Bognanian, a service rep, said they would honor the 80,000 mile warranty but would have to order the part which would take 3 days. However, since I was on a trip, he said I could continue on my trip safely and the catalytic converter could be replaced under warranty in Austin. They turned off the check-engine light.

The check-engine light came on again in Wichita as I returned to Austin. I went to Eddy's Toyota dealership, and they said the same thing. However, upon returning to Austin, no local dealership will honor the warranty, and Toyota's national offices will give me \$300 toward a new catalytic converter that will be between \$1550-\$1752 (plus tax) to replace.

One of my neighbors suggested I write to you and request that you see if you can get Toyota's national offices to cover this totally under warranty. In Flagstaff (where I've lived until 2008), I remember calling Bob Sellers Toyota to find out about the rotten egg smell that came and went. They informed me that it was just bad gasoline, so I took that as the reason each time I smelled the rotten eggs. In discussing this with a mechanic last week, he told me about 2 Toyota Technical Service Bulletins regarding the Matrix catalytic converter problem with "Excessive Sulfur Dioxide" (Technical Service Bulletin #EG003-03 issued on February 24, 2003 and in a TSB EG017-04 on May 28, 2004). Both bulletins explained that the catalytic converter should be replaced if a customer complained about a sulfur smell. I asked both the local Austin dealership and Toyota's national representative if there is any way I would have known about the Bulletin, and they both agreed that there was no notification sent to customers, even though the bulletins pinpointed EXACTLY which VIN numbers were involved. I have no record of the "rotten egg" phone call since it was just that – a phone call – but I do remember asking about it when the car was "young" since this smell has occurred frequently over the years.

Below is the chronology of my dealings with Toyota since the check-engine light appeared.

MC
092410
TGW

80,743 mi -- 6/15/10 -- Moline, IL – check engine light came on. Immediately went to Hiland Toyota Scion. They did computer check, found catalytic converter burned out. Peter Bogosian said they would make the repair under warranty if I had 3 days to wait for the part to arrive, and that there should be no problem driving the car during the trip and having the work done under warranty upon returning to Austin. I was very pleased with Mr. Bogosian since I was in and out of there in less than an hour. Cost \$39.00

83,136 mi – 6/27/10 – Wichita, KS – check engine light came on.

83,138 mi – 6/28/10 – Wichita, KS – 7:00 am went into Eddy's Toyota. I did not tell them what I'd been told in Moline to make sure there wasn't something else that the check-engine light was indicating. Their analysis agreed that it was the catalytic converter. Again, they said it should be covered under warranty if the repairs were done there, but the part would take several days from Kansas City. I had to be back at work in Austin, so I could not wait. This Eddy's Toyota visit took over 2 hours, at least 45 min. of which was the person doing "paper work" even though the car was ready to go. Cost \$96.15 (less a 50 cent license plate bulb).

6/30/10 -- I returned to Austin and called Champion Toyota (512-440-5000) and Charles Maund Toyota (512-458-2222). Only Champion parts department answered back. He informed me that I needed to talk to a service manager who would be there until 9 pm. When I called back at 7 pm, I was then told that no service managers were there in the evenings. I spoke with Keith Hennessey the next day. He informed me that they would NOT honor the warranty since it was 80,743 (743 miles over the warranty when it was discovered), and I hadn't brought the car there for service so I wasn't in Austin's Champion Toyota's system. (I purchased my Matrix Arizona, and I hadn't found Flagstaff Toyota to be very good.) He told me I could try to work out a deal with Toyota National offices at 800-331-4331 (which I called immediately).

Brandon, at Toyota National offices, put me on hold and discussed it with the Austin people. He then assigned me a [case #1007020989](#). He said that Champion had 3 business days to call me, and that it had been turned over to a customer relations person at Champion. Brandon told me I could call them before the 3 days if I wanted, so I did call right away, but received no answer back.

7/6/10 -- I received a call from [Bill Brown \(440-4500 x 332\)](#) on July 6 at 11:49. I called back at 11:49, but the operator asked who had called me. I said I would check the voicemail that had just beeped. The person was Bill Brown. I phoned back at 11:50, left a message, and did not hear back from him that day. I figured he was just trying to call me "within the 3-day limit".

7/8/10 – I called Toyota National offices again and expressed my frustration since I had not heard back again since 7/6. Brian at Toyota National Offices called me back, and said that they would give me \$300 to fix the catalytic converter. He estimated that the total would be about \$1300 (\$1000 for the part, \$300 for labor). They were only doing this because I was a "good customer", and if I wasn't, they would have given me nothing, even if I'd been just 1 mile or 1 day over the warranty. (No wonder Toyota is getting such a bad reputation – and I bought my cars because of their "quality"?)

I began calling Toyota dealers to see how much it would actually be. From Charles Maund Toyota, it would be \$1752.91. From San Marcos Toyota, it would be \$1520 plus tax. From Champion Toyota, it would be \$1600 plus tax. No one would even come close to the \$1300. Is Toyota national office that out of touch with their dealerships?

7/9/10 – Bill Brown finally phoned back. He said it would be \$1550 total. They had the part. I could sign up on-line for an appointment. One problem on my part -- first I need to save up the \$1550 since I have to pay up front.

By the way, this is my fourth Toyota (2 Corollas, 1 Camry, and this Matrix), and Toyota treats a loyal customer to “we’ll pay you the \$300 after you’ve forked over more than \$1500 to replace a part that we knew was defective from the day you bought your car.” Next time, I’ll look at something other than Toyota since I want a company who backs up their quality.

7/19/01 -- I called Toyota National to find out how long I have to fix the part to receive the \$300. They said it could be done within a year – a year to save?

My 2003 Matrix VIN# is 2T1KR32EX3C [REDACTED], and my Toyota case # is 1007020989.

Thanks for any help you can give me.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

cc: Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A., Inc.
19001 South Western Ave.
Dept. WC11
Torrance, CA 90501

[REDACTED]
Austin, TX
[REDACTED]

August 30, 2010

Dear Senator Doggett:

On June 15, 2010, my catalytic converter on a 2003 Toyota Matrix (purchased 2/2003) burned out at 80,743 miles, which I discovered when my check-engine light appeared in Moline, Illinois, as I was on a trip to Minnesota. I immediately went to Hiland Toyota Scion in Moline. Since it was so few miles over the 80,000 mile warranty, Peter Bognanian, a service rep, said they would honor the 80,000 mile warranty but would have to order the part which would take 3 days. However, since I was on a trip, he said I could continue on my trip safely and the catalytic converter could be replaced under warranty in Austin. They turned off the check-engine light.

The check-engine light came on again in Wichita as I returned to Austin. I went to Eddy's Toyota dealership, and they said the same thing. However, upon returning to Austin, no local dealership will honor the warranty, and Toyota's national offices will give me \$300 toward a new catalytic converter that will be between \$1550-\$1752 (plus tax) to replace.

One of my neighbors suggested I write to you and request that you see if you can get Toyota's national offices to cover this totally under warranty. In Flagstaff (where I've lived until 2008), I remember calling Bob Sellers Toyota to find out about the rotten egg smell that came and went. They informed me that it was just bad gasoline, so I took that as the reason each time I smelled the rotten eggs. In discussing this with a mechanic last week, he told me about 2 Toyota Technical Service Bulletins regarding the Matrix catalytic converter problem with "Excessive Sulfur Dioxide" (Technical Service Bulletin #EG003-03 issued on February 24, 2003 and in a TSB EG017-04 on May 28, 2004). Both bulletins explained that the catalytic converter should be replaced if a customer complained about a sulfur smell. I asked both the local Austin dealership and Toyota's national representative if there is any way I would have known about the Bulletin, and they both agreed that there was no notification sent to customers, even though the bulletins pinpointed EXACTLY which VIN numbers were involved. I have no record of the "rotten egg" phone call since it was just that – a phone call – but I do remember asking about it when the car was "young" since this smell has occurred frequently over the years.

Below is the chronology of my dealings with Toyota since the check-engine light appeared.

80,743 mi -- 6/15/10 -- Moline, IL -- check engine light came on. Immediately went to Hiland Toyota Scion. They did computer check, found catalytic converter burned out. Peter Bogosian said they would make the repair under warranty if I had 3 days to wait for the part to arrive, and that there should be no problem driving the car during the trip and having the work done under warranty upon returning to Austin. I was very pleased with Mr. Bogosian since I was in and out of there in less than an hour. Cost \$39.00

83,136 mi -- 6/27/10 -- Wichita, KS -- check engine light came on.

83,138 mi – 6/28/10 – Wichita, KS – 7:00 am went into Eddy's Toyota. I did not tell them what I'd been told in Moline to make sure there wasn't something else that the check-engine light was indicating. Their analysis agreed that it was the catalytic converter. Again, they said it should be covered under warranty if the repairs were done there, but the part would take several days from Kansas City. I had to be back at work in Austin, so I could not wait. This Eddy's Toyota visit took over 2 hours, at least 45 min. of which was the person doing "paper work" even though the car was ready to go. Cost \$96.15 (less a 50 cent license plate bulb).

6/30/10 -- I returned to Austin and called Champion Toyota (512-440-5000) and Charles Maund Toyota (512-458-2222). Only Champion parts department answered back. He informed me that I needed to talk to a service manager who would be there until 9 pm. When I called back at 7 pm, I was then told that no service managers were there in the evenings. I spoke with Keith Hennessey the next day. He informed me that they would NOT honor the warranty since it was 80,743 (743 miles over the warranty when it was discovered), and I hadn't brought the car there for service so I wasn't in Austin's Champion Toyota's system. (I purchased my Matrix Arizona, and I hadn't found Flagstaff Toyota to be very good.) He told me I could try to work out a deal with Toyota National offices at 800-331-4331 (which I called immediately).

Brandon, at Toyota National offices, put me on hold and discussed it with the Austin people. He then assigned me a case #1007020989. He said that Champion had 3 business days to call me, and that it had been turned over to a customer relations person at Champion. Brandon told me I could call them before the 3 days if I wanted, so I did call right away, but received no answer back.

7/6/10 -- I received a call from Bill Brown (440-4500 x 332) on July 6 at 11:49. I called back at 11:49, but the operator asked who had called me. I said I would check the voicemail that had just beeped. The person was Bill Brown. I phoned back at 11:50, left a message, and did not hear back from him that day. I figured he was just trying to call me "within the 3-day limit".

7/8/10 – I called Toyota National offices again and expressed my frustration since I had not heard back again since 7/6. Brian at Toyota National Offices called me back, and said that they would give me \$300 to fix the catalytic converter. He estimated that the total would be about \$1300 (\$1000 for the part, \$300 for labor). They were only doing this because I was a "good customer", and if I wasn't, they would have given me nothing, even if I'd been just 1 mile or 1 day over the warranty. (No wonder Toyota is getting such a bad reputation – and I bought my cars because of their "quality"?)

I began calling Toyota dealers to see how much it would actually be. From Charles Maund Toyota, it would be \$1752.91. From San Marcos Toyota, it would be \$1520 plus tax. From Champion Toyota, it would be \$1600 plus tax. No one would even come close to the \$1300. Is Toyota national office that out of touch with their dealerships?

7/9/10 – Bill Brown finally phoned back. He said it would be \$1550 total. They had the part. I could sign up on-line for an appointment. One problem on my part -- first I need to save up the \$1550 since I have to pay up front.

By the way, this is my fourth Toyota (2 Corollas, 1 Camry, and this Matrix), and Toyota treats a loyal customer to "we'll pay you the \$300 after you've forked over more than \$1500 to replace a part that we

knew was defective from the day you bought your car.” Next time, I’ll look at something other than Toyota since I want a company who backs up their quality.

7/19/01 -- I called Toyota National to find out how long I have to fix the part to receive the \$300. They said it could be done within a year – a year to save?

My 2003 Matrix VIN# is 2T1KR32EX3C [REDACTED] and my Toyota case # is 1007020989.

Thanks for any help you can give me.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

cc: Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A., Inc.
19001 South Western Ave.
Dept. WC11
Torrance, CA 90501