

Temporary Complaint Number (TCN): KAN15-2251

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

Form Approved: O.M.B. No. 2127-0008

Required Information in **Bold**

**Vehicle Information**

**Vehicle Identification Number (VIN)** (See Instructions on the next page to locate the VIN.)

J T 6 H T 0 0 W 4 W 0 [Redacted]

Select/Enter Make

LEXUS

Enter Model

LX 470

Select/Enter Year

1998

**Incident Information**

**Approximate Incident Date**

02/20/2010

For multiple incident dates enter the first date of occurrence.

(mm/dd/yyyy)

Was there a Crash?  Yes  No

Was there a Fire?  Yes  No

**Failure Mileage** 118,000 miles

For multiple incidents enter the first failure mileage.

**Number of Persons Injured, if any** 0

**Speed (at time of incident)** 0 mph

**Number of Deaths, if any** 0

**Description** (up to 1900 characters)

1344 characters remaining

**WARNING:** This description, exactly as you enter it, may appear in a public NHTSA database.

**Do not include any personal information** (name, street/email address, phone number, social security/driver license number, Vehicle Identification Number (VIN), etc...).

Check Engine on with code P0171. The code has been on for over 6 months without any cause/reason. I have worked with Lexus and followed recommendations from Lexus without any success of resolving it. Lexus took a fuel sample in August 2010 and I have not received any responses from Lexus as of Nov. 15, 2010. Since the "Check Engine" light has been on regardless since Feb. 20, 2010, the function of "Check Engine" light is lost. This is a safety hazard as the driver will no longer receive any warning of any real potential problem with the vehicle.

*letter to lexus Customer Service attached.*

If your component is not listed below, please describe the component in the above description field.

**Failed Component 1**

Engine

**Failed Component 2**

Fuel System

**Failed Component 3**

Unknown or Other

[Redacted] 11/15/2010

**Personal Information**

**First Name** [Redacted]

**Last Name** [Redacted]

**Email** [Redacted] (provided earlier and locked for your security)

**Daytime Phone** [Redacted] **Evening Phone** [Redacted]

**Address 1** [Redacted]

**Address 2** [Redacted]

**City** Basking Ridge

**State** NEW JERSEY **Zip Code** [Redacted]

Copy to: Dept of Transportation  
NHTSA, safecars.gov

Monday, November 15, 2010

Mark S. Templin, Group Vice President and General Manager  
Albert Smith, Vice President, Customer Services  
Lexus Headquarters  
P. O. Box 10054  
Toledo, Ohio 43682-4407

Re: VIN Number: JT6HT00W4W[REDACTED] Lexus LX470  
Prolonged Failure to Restore Check Engine Light Alert with Code P0171

Dear Mr. Templin and Mr. Smith:

I am writing to you because I have exhausted all means to get help from Lexus with an ongoing problem with my vehicle from Lexus. My "Check Engine" light has been with code P0171 since February 2010. I sincerely hope someone in your position with your scope of responsibility and commitment to quality and customer satisfaction could help me to rectify this.

I own a 1998 Lexus LX 470 since 2001. I purchased it as a certified pre-owned luxury vehicle from Lexus of Bridgewater, New Jersey. The vehicle has been serviced only by Lexus since I purchased it. I am copying the Service Manager, Mr. Ron Gwinnett, on this letter since he is very familiar with my ordeal with the "Check Engine" light problem.

The chronology of the "Check Engine" light problem is summarized as follows:

1. In February 2009, we drove this vehicle for our ski trip to Vermont; and the "Check Engine" light came on after we arrived at the ski resort in Vermont. The vehicle seemed to lack power when we tried to start it the next morning after our arrival. I thought it was due to cold weather but we didn't have this problem in the past few years. As a precaution, we started and drove it each day. Somehow, we were able to drive it back home at the end of the week.

The vehicle was serviced by Lexus of Bridgewater on February 26, 2009. I was told that the throttle needed to be replaced and we agreed to have it replaced. The repair was close to \$1,400. The computer code was P1121. The vehicle worked well for the remaining of 2009.

2. In February 2010, the same event took place again during our ski trip to Vermont. The "Check Engine" light came on as soon as we arrived at the ski resort just like in 2009. It seemed like too much of a coincidence. We thought that an "older" Lexus LX 470 couldn't tolerate colder climate? We used the same care as in 2009: we started and drove the vehicle each day to ensure that it would be drivable at the end of the week.

I purchased this luxury class SUV because I thought my family could rely on the quality of Lexus for all climates and terrains as we take great pleasure in outdoor sporting activities. These two scary incidents of "Check Engine" light in snowy Vermont began to shake my confidence about Lexus.

On **March 1, 2010**, I brought the vehicle back to Lexus of Bridgewater for the "Check Engine" light problem and was told that it was due to a different problem, code P0171. This is the beginning of the Code P0171 problem with no identifiable cause after the technician ran a full diagnostic.

The Work Statement stated that it was due to failed mass airflow; and I was told to monitor the vehicle. Unfortunately, the "Check Engine" light came back on again shortly after the vehicle was serviced and code P0171 cleared.

3. On **June 3, 2010**, I once again brought the vehicle back to Lexus of Bridgewater for the "Check Engine" light problem because the vehicle failed an inspection for not compliant with established emission standards. This time was code P0135 that led to the "Check Engine" light alert. However, if the car were not due for an inspection, I wouldn't have known something else was wrong with the vehicle, as the "Check Engine" light has been on since February under an earlier code, P0171. This is a safety concern as the "Check Engine" light has been on after code P0171 was identified. All other potential safety warning would be masked under code P0171.
4. On **June 11, 2010**, I brought the vehicle back for the "Check Engine" light once more and expressed my concern that I no longer have a working "Check Engine" light. Once again, Lexus of Bridgewater ran a full diagnostic. I was told that the Oxygen Sensor that was repaired on June 3 needed to be replaced. The same code P0135 was found. The technician tested the vehicle for 20 miles to ensure that the "Check Engine" light didn't come back on. Unfortunately, shortly after this visit, the "Check Engine" light came back on again.
5. On **July 27, 2010**, I brought the vehicle in for "Check Engine" light on problem. And, once again the code was P0171. The technician ran a diagnostic and didn't identify any other mechanical problem with the vehicle. I was told that the code was due to using fuel containing ethanol additives and that I should no longer to re-fuel with gasoline containing any ethanol additives. However, this recommendation is not correct neither as the "Check Engine" light came back on before I even had the chance to re-fuel.

The recommendation of not to use any gasoline with ethanol additive was a concern to me. While I could try my best to avoid re-fueling at any gas station that uses ethanol additive, it is the wave of the future and it is already a legal requirement in some states like Florida. Does this mean I could no longer drive this vehicle to those states without damaging this vehicle?

6. With these doubts, I called 1-888-255-3987 on August 3, 2010 to ask for further assistance with this code P0171 and to get some clarity on the recommendation on acceptable level of ethanol additives.

I first spoke to someone who resides in Florida and she told me that no one reported this as a problem in her state even though all gasoline in Florida contains some percentage of ethanol additives. I said to her, how strange that no one has this problem in Florida but ethanol is not even that prevalent in New Jersey and I have this ongoing problem. She then transferred my call to someone in the headquarter office. I then spoke to someone named Jessica from the Lexus Headquarter in California.

I reiterated the chains of events regarding the persistent "Check Engine" light problem with code P0171 to Jessica. Based on her research, she also told me that my model of Lexus could be refueled with gasoline containing up to 10% ethanol additives. While this is not consistent with the recommendation I received from Lexus of Bridgewater, it seems more logical as the wave of the future would be for gasoline to contain some type of additive like ethanol not to mention that no one reported this problem from states such as Florida.

I told Jessica that her research brought some comfort to me as this is our recreation vehicle and it would be very difficult to avoid using gasoline without any additives in some states and Canada.

During this call, Jessica also promised me that someone would be calling me within two business days after investigating this problem. I received one follow-up call informing me that no other customer has reported a problem like mine and he/she would be contacting Lexus of Bridgewater to get information on this complaint. Unfortunately, no one followed through on my behalf after the initial follow-up call. I checked with Lexus of Bridgewater and was told that no one from headquarter contacted them regarding this persistent "Check Engine" light problem with code P0171.

7. On August 6, 2010, out of sheer frustration, I once again returned to Lexus of Bridgewater with the same problem. It was during this visit that I insisted on having Lexus of Bridgewater to do some additional investigation to pinpoint the real problem behind code P0171. I spoke to Mr. Gwinnett and he has been helpful to help me. He suggested to have a fuel sample sent to Lexus headquarter in California for further analysis. In addition, he also mentioned that he would reach out to an expert mechanic on my behalf to see if he could resolve this peculiar problem.

I have followed up with Mr. Gwinnett consistently and frequently since my last visit on August 6; and I was told no one from the headquarter office has responded to him.

8. On Nov. 13, 2010, I brought my vehicle in for a scheduled maintenance. The same code, P0171, for "Check Engine" light was diagnosed; and given that it has been written in the history of this vehicle, no action was taken.

I continue to drive a functioning vehicle with the "Check Engine" light on. I spoke to Mr. Gwinnett in person on Nov. 13 and he once again told me that he hasn't received any feedback from the headquarter office regarding the fuel analysis.

As of today, I have exhausted every possible means to rectify this persistent "Check Engine" light problem without any success. I sincerely hope someone in your position with your scope of responsibility could rectify this faulty code for my vehicle. As I stated before, since the "Check Engine" light is on all the time, it has become a safety hazard as I wouldn't be alerted when an actual safety concern is triggered.

In short, I purchased this luxury vehicle because I thought Lexus could deliver on quality and customer satisfaction. I would not take a chance to drive this vehicle to Vermont for ski again in 2011 without rectifying this safety hazard. Moreover, how could this vehicle pass the next routine motor vehicle inspection? How can I convince the inspector that my vehicle, despite of the "Check Engine" light, performs as intended?

As we are approaching 2011, I realize that it has taken me most of 2010 working diligently with Lexus of Bridgewater and the headquarter office without any adequate resolution. I am obligated to report this as a motor vehicle safety concern to the appropriate governmental oversight organization.

As I stated before, I felt I have exhausted all means to rectify this. I hope to hear from you with a recommendation for the next step.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Basking Ridge, NJ [REDACTED]

Attachments: Statement of Work from 2/26/09 to 8/6/10, totaling 6 service calls

Copy: Mr. Ron Gwinnett, Service Manager  
Lexus of Bridgewater  
P. O. Box 6000  
1555 Route 22 East  
Bridgewater, New Jersey 08807  
(732) 271-4065

Lexus Customer Assistance Center

P.O. Box 2991-Mail Drop L201  
Torrance, CA 90509-2991

Reported: DOT, NHTSA, Office of Defeats Investigation/CRD  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590  
Complaint Number KAN15-2251



Basking Ridge, NJ



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Dept. of Transportation  
NHTSA  
Office of Defects Investigation/CRD  
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Washington, DC 20590

