



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)

1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

September 19, 2012

[REDACTED]

Groveport, OH [REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

NVS-216 mec
Ref. No. 10474785

Thank you for your correspondence concerning your model year (MY) 2007 Toyota Camry vehicle. Your letter was received by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) Office of Defects Investigation.

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. 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.

You state that the check engine light illuminated in your MY 2007 Toyota Camry vehicle at 40,000 miles. You took your vehicle to the dealer and they advised you that diagnostic test showed the problem was caused by the charcoal canister. You were advised by the dealer not to worry about the problem. You contacted Toyota customer service regarding the dealer's advice but they were not able to help you.

We have reviewed our database in an effort to identify whether a safety defect trend exists with regards to the engine system, specifically the charcoal canister, in MY 2007 Toyota Camry vehicles. At this time there is insufficient evidence to warrant opening a safety defect investigation at this time. However, the information you provided has been entered into our database and will be considered with future reports to identify any safety defect trends that may require our attention. For your information, the NHTSA investigation and recall process can be found on our web site at www.nhtsa.gov.

The symptoms of wear or failure of a vehicle's charcoal canister are;

- Check Engine Light may illuminate
- Fuel tank may be hard to fill
- Fuel smell may be noted

A charcoal canister captures leaking fuel tank vapors and puts them back into the engine's combustion process, thereby lowering the vehicle's pollution capacity. The evaporative control system functions in such a way that the charcoal canister not only captures and stores but also purges raw fuel vapors. It stores any leaking fuel tank vapors or raw hydrocarbons that would otherwise escape and pollute the atmosphere. The operating conditions of the EVAP, which change according to the engine temperature, speed and load help these captured fuel vapors to be put back into the combustion process.

The charcoal canister, which is the vapor-holding device for the EVAP System, is a plastic enclosure that contains a large piece of activated charcoal. Activated charcoal is a form of charcoal that has been treated with oxygen to increase its ability to absorb fuel vapors by opening up tiny pores between the carbon atoms present in charcoal. The charcoal canister is tested by the vehicle's on-board diagnostic (OBDII) emissions system daily for its vapor-holding ability as it is subjected to moisture and temperature changes. Increase or decrease in moisture and temperature affects its vapor-holding ability.

Charcoal canisters are essentially created to decrease the amount of air pollution the vehicle creates and also increase its fuel efficiency. The charcoal canister traps and absorbs fuel vapors from the fuel tank and the air/fuel induction system of a motor vehicle when the engine is not running. When the engine is running, the fuel vapors in the canister are absorbed through a vacuum hose into the intake manifold and put back into the system.

Without the presence of a charcoal canister, the excess fuel vapors would collect beneath your vehicle and emanate a strong smell of fuel, apart from allowing unfiltered air to enter the engine. If your vehicle is running on an unpaved or dirt road, dust particles could enter the engine causing abrasion and other damages and eventually resulting in costly repairs to your vehicle.

Charcoal canisters do have a tendency of clogging up due to the accumulation of large amounts of dust and impurities from the air, which reduce the performance efficiency of the canisters. After a certain period of time, the canister will stop functioning and will have to be replaced. The replacement should be done only by a qualified professional, at a reputable garage, who would be aware of the risks involved if it is done incorrectly.

Should you encounter a safety-related problem with a motor vehicle or 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, a summary listing of vehicle owners' complaints, safety recalls, manufacturers' service bulletins, etc. can be obtained at www.nhtsa.gov.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Randy Reid". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "R" and "D".

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