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Toyota To Make Adjustments To Recalled Autos To End U.S. Floor Mat Woes

NAGOYA (Nikkei)--Toyota Motor Corp. (7203) has decided to change gas pedals in recalled autos in the U.S. in an agreement with the U.S. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, The Nikkei learned Friday.

The move follows a fatal accident in August that involved a Lexus vehicle there. This accident has been blamed on the accelerator getting stuck to the floor mat -- a problem that soon afterward was reported to possibly affect 3.8 million vehicles. The number has risen to more than 4 million because of vehicles that have been manufactured and sold since then.

Toyota still maintains that the recalled vehicles -- including the Camry, the Prius and the Lexus ES350 -- are not actually defective. But to put an end to the potentially image-damaging saga, it has decided to change their gas pedals to ones less likely to get stuck.

The total cost of the repairs is estimated at tens of billions of yen. Because the company has already set aside reserves, the recall will not have a large impact on its earnings in the current year through March 31, 2010, according to a Toyota executive.

The NHTSA is expected to announce the accord as soon as early next week.

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