



ODI RESUME

Department
of Transportation

National Highway
Traffic Safety
Administration

INVESTIGATION: RQ99-020
SUBJECT: Steering Wheel Detachment
PROMPTED BY: IE99-068, Toyota Safety Recall 98V-155
PRINCIPAL ENGINEER: Sonny Murianka

DATE OPENED: 10/6/99
DATE CLOSED:

MANUFACTURER: Toyota
MODEL(S): Camry and Lexus
SUBJECT MODEL YEAR(S): 1995-1998 VEHICLE POPULATION: 540,037

PROBLEM DESCRIPTION: Steering wheel detaches from the steering shaft due to the steering shaft nut loosening and backing off of the steering shaft.

FAILURE REPORT SUMMARY

	ODI	MANUFACTURER	TOTAL
COMPLAINTS:	3	6	9
CRASHES:	0	0	0
INJ CRASHES:	0	0	0
# INJURIES:	0	0	0
FAT CRASHES:	0	0	0
# FATALS:	0	0	0
OTHER:	0	0	0

DESCRIPTION OF OTHER:

ACTION: This investigation (RQ) is closed. Safety recall campaign number assigned is 99V-307.

ENGINEER: _____ DIV CHF: _____ OFC DIR: _____

DATE

DATE

DATE

SUMMARY: In July 1998, while still conducting its analysis into the reason for the separations, Toyota issued a safety recall (98V-155) concerning the steering wheel shaft nut not being properly torqued on certain 1994 model year Camry cars. This included only the vehicles built in Japan. Meanwhile, three owners contacted ODI alleging that the steering wheels completely separated from the steering shafts while they were driving their 1995 Camrys, vehicles not included in the recall. RQ99-020 was opened to evaluate the recall and to investigate why steering wheel separations were occurring on vehicles outside the recalled population.

Toyota's analysis concluded that the problem was due to the Japanese plant using the lower end of the torque specification. The repeated application of "a large force" being exerted on the steering wheel by drivers exiting the vehicle tends to loosen the shaft nut. On October 29, 1999, Toyota notified the agency that it is recalling 540,037 MY 1995-98 Camry and 1994-98 Lexus cars manufactured in Japan, which encompasses all vehicles built before the production line (increased torque specification) modification.

RQ 99020C

The action taken by Toyota is sufficient to resolve the issues raised by this investigation. Accordingly, this investigation is closed.