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NVS-210

24 Sept 2005
2005 SEP 26 P 3 59

OFFICE OF DEFECTS
INVESTIGATION

Re: DP05-002

Mr. Scott Von
U.S. Dept. of Transportation
Natl. Highway Traffic Safety Admin.
400 Seventh St, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Scott:

There is still a gold mine of information to be retrieved from the NHTSA files on the acceleration and brake defect issues. I am also receiving phone calls from various individuals who have accessed the NHTSA web site and told me about their problems with the vehicles under preliminary investigation.

Since I am returning to Arizona on October 1st, I have decided not to waste time and energy writing out the various ODI informat. anymore. I will simply print the remainder of the complaint information when I return & forward that to you.

However, I have six (6) pages of Attachments with this letter. Page 1 consists of ODI numbers for 2002 and 2003 Toyota Siennas.

Page 2 covers the 2002 RX 300 Lexus

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Mr. Scott Van

30 Sept 2008 - 2 -

Page 3 through 5 cover only a limited portion of the complaints filed concerning the 2004 RX 330 horses. I did not indicate the specific nature of each OOI complaint, but each one involves ~~either~~ an acceleration and/or brake issue. I thought that by providing you this information, it would speed the process up.

I also have some materials on the horses GS 300 which I have not yet completed, but they should be ready when you come to Phoenix. If that trip is not approved, I will mail the material to you -

I am also enclosing two articles from the Business Section of the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette written by Don Hammond, another December 08, 2004 and February 05, 2005 concerning hesitation issues in horses and Toyota vehicles.

Very truly yours,

2351 E. Orange Ave
Phoenix, AZ 85020

Jocelyn Zepher

* It seems that there is a real problem with the ECM module!!!

ODI

Attachment

Fail Date - 1-

Toyota Sienna 2002

✓ 1001-2434

Brake failure? Crash.

✓ 1006-0821 With foot on brake, V. 11/10/04
occasionally attempts to surge forward (CBF)

✓ 1011-3380

2/24/05

Accelerated while pulling into parking space
jumped clunk, crashed into store. (Was brake
applied?)

Toyota Sienna 2003

✓ 1006-2829

? 11/1/01?

When depressing brake pedal, it felt like
V continued to accelerate. V crept forward at
intersect, on wheelies applied. (CBF + Accel)

✓ 1011-3075

2/15/05

V accelerated to 85 mph on highway, passed several
vehicles, changed lanes to avoid collision,
proceeded to strike concrete barrier, CRASH.

ODI

ATTACHMENT

FAILDATE - 2 -

2002 RX 300 LEXUS

✓ 1001-8315

5/4/03

Throttle stuck, causing V to rapidly accelerate;
Engine had to be turned off.

✓ 1001-8360

5/7/03

While going slow, the car accelerates suddenly,
happened twice, and both times hit wall.

✓ 1004-5133

8/30/03

Driving on freeway at 60 mph, heard
beep, and V started to spin out of
control.

✓ 1004-6242

?

When braking, the brake pedal goes to the
floor. V hit a tree & car. (BF+Accel.)

✓ 1008-9177

7/1/04

Driver came to complete stop. V surged forward.
(Must be w/foot on brake) (BF+Accel)

✓ 1012-5377

1/12/04

Brake system failed every 1,000 miles. Consumer afraid
to drive V on highway. CONSUMER HAD NEAR DEATH
EXPERIENCE BECAUSE OF LOSS OF CONTROL OF
VEHICLE (Scott. What is this all about?)

ODI

ATTACHMENT

Fall Date - 3-

2004 R X 330 LEXUS
(See Cover letter)

[15] 1003.9614 ✓

9/25/03

1004.7346 ✓

11/17/03

1005.2445 ✓

11/19/03

1005.4711 ✓

1/3/04

1005.4949 X

1/26/04

1006.0025 ✓

7/1/03

1008.0498 X

3/2/04

[16-30]

1006.3670 ✓

3/23/04

1006.4432 ✓

4/2/04

1006.5823 ✓

4/1/04

1006.6256 ✓

4/15/04

1007.2835 ✓

4/14/03 ?

1007.4188

5/17/04

Chry Caravan

Dodge Durango

ODI

ATTACHMENT

Fail Date - 4-

1007.6158 ✓

6/4/04

1007.9030 ✓

1/2/04

1008.0635 ✓

7/8/04

1008.0875 ✓

6/29/04

(Similar to mine, but I deed
not hit gas pedal under any circumstances!!!)

1008.1034 ✓

11/6/03

1008.2200 ✓

7/17/04

CB1453

1008.2602 ✓

7/25/04

1008.6808 ✓

8/13/04

1008.8097 ✓

7/15/04

1008.8614 ✓

10/10/03

1008.8672 ✓

7/8/04

1008.8791 ✓

8/27/04

1009.0630 ✓

8/24/04

SDI

ATTACHMENT

File Date - 5-

1009.0818 ✓

8/8/04

1009.1268 ✓

6/1/04

1009.1291 ✓

7/16/04

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Hesitating Lexus unsettling for owners

Wednesday, December 08, 2004

By Don Hammonds, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

A transmission problem in 2002 to 2004 Lexus ES300 and ES330 sedans can cause hesitation before the car accelerates in certain situations — and create some unsettling moments for the cars' owners.

McMurray resident Timothy W. Farabaugh was among those who experienced the problem with his 2004 Lexus ES330, and Consumer Reports has uncovered similar difficulties with the pricey model, which ranges from the mid-\$30,000s to mid-\$40,000s..

Farabaugh said his wife, Judy, experienced the hesitation problem firsthand when approaching a four-lane highway with a yield sign. "After almost coming to a stop, and at the proper point in time, she pressed on the accelerator in order to merge into the far right lane that was wide open. ... Nothing happened.

"Then her car lunged into the intended lane, only to have a car that just changed lanes come bearing down on her, horn blowing, hands and fingers waving," Farabaugh said. "This was a very dangerous situation that almost resulted in the car being hit from behind. Impact was avoided by only inches."

David Champion, director of automobile testing for Consumer Reports said his staff also had problems with transmission delay when testing the 2004 Lexus ES330. "Your reader's experience does sound a lot worse than what we experienced, but that might be just the difference between cars."

Farabaugh said he was told that the problem related to a new "drive-by-wire" system in which the drivetrain went from a direct drive by cable to a system of commands that communicates between the gas pedal, the computer, the transmission and the engine." In other words, he said, "Instead of the gas pedal being connected directly to a series of cables and rods, the gas pedal now communicates with a computer and the



Drivers have experienced a transmission problem with the Lexus ES330, above, which caused the car to hesitate.

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computer tells the transmission and engine what to do."

Champion said he wasn't so sure that the "drive-by-wire" system was the problem.

"We've driven quite a few new cars that have drive-by-wire, and they don't have that problem," he said. "But we do know from our reliability data that both the 2002 model and the 2004 models seem to have had transmission problems — a higher incident of transmission problems, than the average car."

A Lexus spokesman said the firm was aware of the problem and was investigating both the cause and the extensiveness of it. There have been no reports of accidents caused by the problem, but, "We did find a few complaints — not a lot — about the car hesitating excessively in certain conditions, after firm pressure was applied on the accelerator pedal and trying to accelerate quickly," said Brad Nelson, a Lexus public relations consultant said.

He said the problems were confined to the 2002-2004 Lexus ES300 and ES330 models, all of which are equipped with five speed automatic transmissions.

"The transmissions on the cars have a sophisticated system that learns driver habits and adjusts itself to fit their driving pattern. The transmission acts to minimize what we call shift shock by regulating the onset of power," Nelson said.

"One byproduct of this is that there is a small delay between the time that a driver pushes the throttle and a feeling of strong acceleration. This can vary depending upon the learned driving pattern."

Lexus has several options should it be determined that remedies must be made, Nelson said.

"One option would be a service campaign where all owners are notified that there is an issue and that there is a fix for it. Then there is what we call a technical service information bulletin that is sent to dealers, and when customers have a particular complaint, the dealers can address [it]," Nelson said.

"Typically, when there are just a handful of people and cars involved and it is not considered a widespread or major issue, we try to handle things through a technical service information bulletin."

(Don Hammonds can be reached at dhammonds@post-gazette.com or 412-263-1538.)

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Agency to look into hesitation issue in Lexus, Toyota models

Saturday, February 05, 2005

By Don Hammonds, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration plans to look into a transmission hesitation problem in certain Lexus and Toyota models to determine whether to go forward with a full investigation.

The decision comes on the heels of two stories in the Post-Gazette in December. The newspaper initially wrote about problems McMurray resident Timothy W. Farabaugh said he was having with his 2004 Lexus ES330, and followed that up with similar stories from other owners of five-speed Lexus and Toyota models.

There have been no reports of accidents because of the problem, but the high of e-mails and telephone calls prompted by the stories warrant referral of the matter to agency investigators, NHTSA spokeswoman Liz Neblett said yesterday. She cautioned such a move does not mean that the agency would launch a formal investigation.

The hesitation problems have been reported by owners of Lexus ES330 models made between 2002 and 2004 the Toyota Camry and Highlander and other Toyota and upscale Lexus brand models equipped with the same five-speed automatics.

A search of NHTSA records and interviews with Consumer Reports magazine also show owners of other car makes are suffering from the same hesitation problem, including BMW's 3 Series, Ford Explorers and Escapes, and Dodge Durango 4x4.

David Champion, senior director of Consumer Reports' Auto Test Center in Connecticut, said the magazine's testers have encountered the same problems in the Audi A6 2.7T, the Audi Allroad, the Mazda6 equipped with the V-6 engine, and the Volkswagen Jetta 1.8T.

Spokespersons for those companies could not be reached for comment.

Previous coverage

- Hesitation issue goes beyond Toyota's luxury line (12/10/04)
- Hesitating Lexus unsettling for owners (12/8/04)

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What makes the issue perplexing is that no two models of a given car brand may have the same problem. Some owners of the makes involved say they've noticed nothing, while others will say the problem is chronic.

One Lexus dealer, for instance, has said he was able to duplicate the problem only on a few of the cars on his lot, while many others didn't have the problem at all.

The problem involves the transmission gearbox electronic control unit and the engine management control unit, Champion said.

"It's the way in which the transmission gearbox electronic control unit talks to the engine management control unit. The integration of the two systems will allow the transmission to function in the right gear and the engine to provide the power instantaneously in a smooth fashion," he said.

"When you accelerate, the gearbox may change down a gear or find the right gear, and to make the transmission takeoff a smooth one, it retards the ignition to reduce engine power. Unfortunately, while the control unit works out what it's supposed to be doing, you're putting your foot on the accelerator. It can lose its way and doesn't energize the engine and transmission quickly enough," he said.

The best thing for people who are encountering problems to do is take the issue up with their dealership first, Champion said. "Have them reprogram your engine control unit and see if that fixes the problem to your satisfaction. If not, go back and complain again," he said.

But it may be that no fix will completely eliminate the problem. That's what apparently has happened with Toyota and Lexus cars so far, though company officials have said repeatedly that they are aware of the problem and are looking for permanent fixes.

(Don Hammonds can be reached at dhammonds@post-gazette.com or 412-263-1538.)

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