U.S. Department of Transportation

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

ODI RESUME

OFFICE OF DEFECTS INVESTIGATION

NHTSA

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Investigation: PE 10-012
Date Opened: 04/29/2010 **Date Closed:** 08/26/2010
Investigator: John Abbott **Reviewer:** Scott Yon
Approver: Richard Boyd
Subject: Sticking Accelerator Pedal

MANUFACTURER & PRODUCT INFORMATION

Manufacturer: CHRYSLER GROUP LLC
Products: 2007 Dodge Caliber
Population: 176,185

Problem Description: The accelerator pedal can stick or bind and not return to the idle position when it is released.

FAILURE REPORT SUMMARY

	ODI	Manufacturer	Total
Complaints:	12	29	41
Crashes/Fires:	0	0	0
Injury Incidents:	0	0	0
Fatality Incidents:	0	0	0
Other*:	0	74	74

***Description of Other:** Warranty claims

ACTION / SUMMARY INFORMATION

Action: Close this investigation, Chrysler has announced a Safety Recall 10V-234

Summary:

In their Defect Information Report (DIR) of June 3, 2010, Chrysler Group, LLC (Chrysler) notified NHTSA that it will conduct a safety recall of approximately 25,265 model year 2007 Dodge Caliber vehicles and 71 model year 2007 Jeep Compass vehicles manufactured from March 7, 2006 through May 19, 2006. The recall will remedy a defect in the accelerator pedal assembly (accelerator pedal) of the Electronic Throttle Control (ETC) system that can cause the accelerator pedal to stick in an open position and not return to the idle position when released.

As stated in the opening resume, the subject vehicles (Caliber) are equipped with an ETC accelerator pedal manufactured by the CTS Corporation, the same supplier of the ETC accelerator pedal used in the recently recalled Toyota vehicles. The ETC accelerator pedal used in Caliber and Compass vehicles is not the same as those used in the recalled Toyota vehicles. They are of a different design, were manufactured using different tooling, and fail in a different manner.

According to Chrysler and CTS, oversized bearing pockets in the ETC accelerator pedal housing of the Caliber and Compass vehicles allows the accelerator pedal pivot shaft bearings to "dislodge" from the housing. If this occurs, the accelerator pedal can stick in an open position (i.e., fails to return to the closed position) or be slow to return.

Chrysler's DIR notes that the subject vehicles are equipped with "Smart Brake" Technology and contends that the impact of a binding or sticking accelerator pedal can be negated by its Smart Brake system. In Chrysler's view, the system enables the brake pedal input to override the throttle control system and safely depower the vehicle and minimizes the potential for safety consequences resulting from the defect in the accelerator pedal. Further, Chrysler states, as a result of the presence of this technology, Chrysler Group LLC has concluded that the condition described in this report does not present an unreasonable risk to motor vehicle safety.

ODI does not concur with Chrysler's position that the "Smart Brake" technology employed in the subject vehicles eliminates unreasonable risks to safety stemming from the ETC accelerator pedal defect. Aside from the fact that the technology is applicable only to situations where the brake pedal is activated, the Smart Brake system implemented in the subject vehicles will override a stuck throttle under a discrete set of conditions. Because driver behaviors (e.g., kicking at the accelerator pedal to dislodge it, or pumping the brake pedal instead of steady application) may delay or prevent activation of the Smart Brake system in the subject vehicles, ODI believes that this "Smart Brake" system does not totally eliminate unreasonable risks to safety posed by this defect or the necessity of a safety recall in this case.

See Safety Recall file 10V-234 for recall details.