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# Holland woman frantically calls 911 as car speeds

Tuesday, August 12, 2008

By Nate Reens

The Grand Rapids Press

HOLLAND TOWNSHIP -- A Holland woman frantically called 911 Sunday when she could not get her father's 2007 Lexus ES350 to slow down, eventually running a red light and hitting another motorist.

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Mary Leonard, 18, was in a panic with emergency dispatchers while trying to figure out why the vehicle continued accelerating, Ottawa County sheriff's Lt. Steve Kempker said.

Police are uncertain what caused the mechanical trouble, but the problem could be related to a 2007 recall of that Lexus model and Toyota Camrys, spurred when all-weather floor mats moved and partially depressed the gas pedal. Both vehicles are manufactured by Toyota Motor North America.

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The National Highway Traffic Safety Board said in the recall that the unsecured mats, which are optional accessories, needed to be secured to avoid shifting during driving.

Leonard remained in good condition at Holland Hospital Monday following the 6:45 p.m. crash at Lakewood Boulevard and North River Avenue.


She was pulled from her burning car by Greg Rotman, an Ottawa sheriff's deputy. Leonard suffered a broken leg.

Charles Herrell, 66, of Allegan, was the driver struck by Leonard's vehicle, and he was listed in serious condition at Holland Hospital. He also had to be extricated from his vehicle.

Authorities did not ticket Leonard, saying the crash appears to be a vehicle malfunction. They are not investigating whether the floor mats played a role in the collision.


Police said Leonard should have shifted the vehicle into neutral or shut off the car.

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