U S. Department of Transportation
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

ODI RESUME

Investigation: EA07-010
Prompted By: PE07-016, Consumer Complaints
Date Opened: 08/08/2007 Date Closed: 10/11/2007
Principal Investigator: Scott Yon
Subject: Unwanted Acceleration, Floor Mat

Manufacturer: Toyota Motor Corporation
Products: MY 2002 - 2008 Lexus ES350 and Toyota Camry
Population: 55,000 (estimated)

Problem Description: The accessory all weather floor mat can entrap the throttle pedal.

FAILURE REPORT SUMMARY

	ODI	Manufacturer	Total
Complaints:	26	31	49
Crashes/Fires:	7	7	10
Injury Incidents:	8	6	8
# Injuries:	11	6	13
Fatality Incidents:	1	0	1
# Fatalities:	1	0	1
Other:	35*	4*	39

Description of Other: *ODI: Reports from VRTC Survey, MFR: Related Warranty Claims

Action: This Investigation is closed. Recall 07E-082

Engineer: *D. Scott Yon* 10/15/07 Date: *10/11/2007*
Div. Chief: *Jeffrey L. Quandt* Date: *10/11/2007*
Office Dir.: *Kathleen C. DeMeter* Date: *10/11/2007*

Summary: The driver side floor mat will not interfere with the throttle pedal if properly secured using the retaining hooks provided by Toyota. However, if the all weather mat is unsecured and moves forward from its intended position it can entrap the throttle pedal at the fully open position after it has been depressed. This can happen regardless of whether or not another mat (carpet) is underneath.

When this occurs, some operators react by applying the brake pedal multiple times, depleting the braking system's (vacuum based) power assist. Stopping the vehicle with unassisted braking while the throttle is fully open requires significant pedal force, which some operators did not, or were unable to, apply for the required duration. Continued driving in this condition results in overheated brakes, which further diminishes the braking effectiveness. Some operators attempted to turn the vehicle off by depressing the engine control button, however they were unaware the button had to be depressed for three seconds to stop the engine when the vehicle is in motion; this functionality was not explained adequately in the owner's manual.

In ODI interviews owners reported they were unaware the all weather mat had the potential to interfere with the throttle pedal, advising that this was never properly explained given the significant hazard it represented. Owners reported several explanations for why the mat was unsecured, including that the vehicle was delivered in this condition (most common reason), or that they had (unwittingly) installed the mat themselves, or that another party, such as a car wash attendant, had disturbed the mat without the owner's knowledge. One consumer reported that their vehicle was delivered without the retaining devices installed.

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In a September 26, 2007 letter to NHTSA, Toyota indicated that they would conduct a safety recall to replace the all weather mat with a redesigned mat. According to Toyota, the new mat design will reduce the potential for mat interference with the throttle pedal.

The population noted above represents the number of subject mats that have been sold in the United States. Since Toyota cannot identify which vehicles may have the subject mats, they will send a letter to all registered owners of the subject vehicles (estimated 750k) advising them of the concern and remedy. A copy of that letter will be posted on NHTSA's web site under Recall 07E-082; it contains a description of the condition and the actions an operator should take in the event throttle entrapment occurs while driving.

The fatality incident noted above occurred in July 2007 and was investigated by NHTSA's Special Crash Investigations office. It has not been reported on a Vehicle Owner Questionnaire. The operator reportedly traveled at speeds in excess of 100 mph for an estimated eight miles on an interstate in California before it struck two other vehicles. One of the struck vehicles and the subject vehicle caught fire. The occupant of the struck vehicle did not evacuate and died at the scene. The subject vehicle driver suffered a broken bone. The California Highway Patrol is investigating the incident also.

ODI did not issue an Information Request letter during this investigation. The Toyota reports noted above were reported during Preliminary Evaluation, (PE) 07-016 and are current through April 2007 for MY 2007 Lexus ES350 only. ODI does not have field experience data from Toyota for Camry vehicles.

Throttle entrapment due to improperly installed floor mats could be a concern in all vehicles. Therefore, drivers should always ensure their floor mats are properly and safely installed. This includes original equipment mats (carpet and accessory) and especially aftermarket mats. Operators of vehicles with engine control buttons should also ensure they fully understand the button's functionality.

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