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Toyota, Nissan issue safety recalls

By KEN THOMAS Associated Press Writer
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WASHINGTON — Toyota Motor Corp. said Wednesday it was recalling optional "all-weather" floor mats in 55,000 Lexus ES 350 and Toyota Camry passenger cars because the mat could interfere with the gas pedal and lead to a crash.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration issued a consumer advisory about the heavy-duty rubber floor mats, noting that if unsecured, the map could move forward and trap the gas pedal, causing the vehicle to accelerate uncontrollably.

In a separate move, Nissan Motor Co. said it was recalling nearly 420,000 sport utility vehicles because of possible corrosion in the tube where motorists pump gas.

The recall involves Nissan Pathfinder and Infiniti QX4 SUVs from the 1997-2001 model years. More than 370,000 of the vehicles under recall were originally sold or are currently registered in 22 "cold weather" states and the District of Columbia. Another 45,000 vehicles are in Canada.

In the Toyota recall, NHTSA urged drivers of other vehicles, including the Avalon and Prius, to check the driver-side floor mats to ensure they were properly installed. NHTSA spokesman Rae Tyson said it was taking the step "because we believe potentially it is a very serious safety issue."

Toyota spokesman Bill Kwong said the automaker had not received any complaints about the Avalon and Prius. In some cases, he said the floor mats — used to collect rain water, mud and snow — were stacked on top of the original carpet mats and wedged up against the accelerator.

The vehicle has hooks on the floor that can only secure one mat at a time.

Toyota has received 22 complaints and learned of six accidents allegedly connected to the issue. Kwong said they did not know of any injuries linked to the mats.

The Japanese-based automaker plans to notify owners in early October and expects replacement mats to be available at dealerships by late November.

In a statement, Toyota advised owners to regularly check that their floor mat is properly secured and said "under no circumstances should more than one floor mat ever be used in the driver's seating position."

Owners can contact Toyota at (888) 270-9371 or (800) 331-4331 and Lexus owners can call (800) 255-3987 for more information.

Nissan said its recall was prompted by an inadequate amount of coating on a bracket by the fuel filler tube assembly. In states that use road salt during the winter, a mixture of snow, water and salt could cause corrosion on the bare metal part of the tube and allow fuel to leak.

Nissan spokesman Fred Standish said there were no reports of fires or injuries.

The states covered by the recall include: Connecticut, Delaware, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wisconsin.

Nissan dealers will replace the fuel filler tube assembly with a new one with an improved coating process. Owners will be notified beginning in late November. For more information, owners can contact Nissan at (800) 647-7261.

On the Net:

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration: http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/

Toyota Motor Corp.: http://www.toyota.com/

Nissan Motor Co.: http://www.nissanusa.com/

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