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Sent: 11/6/2007 5:30 PM.

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Subject: FYI: Toyota Needs Skid Control (Forbes Online), etc..

In this part 2 segment, one statement is slightly disturbing (see bold letters below) as it may encourage consultation with a lawyer (that could lead to something more).

Toyota Tacoma Owners Question Trucks' Safety/Owner Wants Toyota to Buy Back Truck (Second of two parts)

Posted: 2:46pm PDT 11/02/07 Updated 11/03/07

A potentially dangerous problem has been found with some 2007 Toyota Tacoma trucks, but one local owner has had trouble getting the automaker to address the problem, according to a Call 3 consumer investigation conducted in conjunction with WSMV TV in Nashville, Tenn. ██████████ of Forest Hill is one of 20 truck owners who have filed complaints with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. All said their trucks suddenly accelerate or lurch forward while stopped. "If you are in severe traffic, your car isn't going to slow down," ██████████ said. "It's going to be a real problem not rear-ending another car." ██████████ tried to work with his Toyota dealership first to get the problem corrected or to get Toyota to buy back the truck under California's lemon law. He said Toyota told him to take it to three different dealerships for inspection. All three noted no problem. ██████████ then headed to the California Arbitration Certification Program, a third-party arbitration process approved by the Department of Consumer Affairs and sponsored by the manufacturers. "What that means to the consumer is they can get a guarantee that the arbitrators are acting with a certain code of conduct, a certain level of expectation that they will be fair and impartial," said Russ Heimerich of the Department of Consumer Affairs. "If they can interact with the manufacturer through a third party who's going to be fair and objective and neutral, we think that's probably just as successful an outcome," Heimerich added. Rosemary Shahan with Consumers for Auto Safety and Reliability, a consumer group, said arbitration may work for some consumers who fear the legal system. But she cautioned that consumers usually do not win. Last year there were 2,049 consumer requests for arbitration. Consumers won repair in 17 percent of cases. Consumer won return or restitution 15 percent of the time. But in 60 percent of cases, consumers got nothing. "It's not as impartial as it should be, and it's not the final word," Shahan said. "We think it serves a purpose," Heimerich said. "The idea is to make the consumer whole. Even if it's 50 or 60 percent success rate, that's 50 to 70 percent of vehicles that are not going to court." ██████████ arbitration was not successful. The arbitrator said there was not enough evidence to support ██████████ complaint. Heimerich said ██████████ could try to get another warranty repair and go through arbitration again, or take his claim to court. Shahan said sometimes all it takes is a letter from an attorney to get a manufacturer to realize it is going to have to buy back the vehicle. ██████████ does not plan to contact an attorney. He is waiting for the outcome of a National Highway Traffic Administration investigation into the surging problem. Toyota has said it was unaware of complaints but will fully cooperate with federal investigators if asked to do so. <http://www.kcra.com/news/14499549/detail.html>

Sub: Toyota Needs Skid Control

Date: 11/05/07

Source: Forbes Online

http://www.forbes.com/business/2007/11/05/toyota-backseat-driver-oped-cz_jf_1106flint.html

Tone: Comprehensive enumeration of the recent Toyota issues トヨタの抱える昨今の問題点を包括的に羅列

世界一儲かっている自動車メーカートヨタに突然問題が多発。夏期販売実績低調 (これに関連してトヨタらしくない販売活動: タンドラは多額のキャッシュバック、カムリMY2008とタコマも少額ながらキャッシュバック)。売れ筋のプリウスハイブリッドの在庫不足。カローラとセコイアはモデルチェンジの時期到来。米国首脳陣三名の競合他社による引き抜き。CR誌での一部車種の酷評。円高。環境推進派よりの非難、など。

Suddenly, Toyota, the world's most profitable automaker, is stuck on the bad news highway. Several pieces of negative news, nine by my count, have nicked the company in recent times. Understand, none will drive the automaker off the road or even swerve its growing business around the world. Even so, the company is having more problems than usual. For starters, before picking up in October, Toyota sales in the U.S. had fallen for three straight months. I cannot remember when this happened last. Toyota sales still are ahead for the first 10 months of the year and its market share has climbed. Inventories are low; the Prius hybrid, a big seller, is scarce. The small Corolla and the huge Sequoia SUV are at the end of their runs, and new models are on the way. Toyota's summer sales slowdown looks more like a blip than any trend, but it is highly unusual for this company to offer so many sales incentives. For example, it is putting significant cash on the hood of its new big pickup, the Tundra, and small amounts on the 2008 Camry sedan and Tacoma, a smaller pickup. In recent weeks, three top American executives have left the company. That is quite unusual for Toyota. The Japanese do not quit their companies and join competitors. To them it is betrayal. To Americans, job-hopping is the way we do business. This development may well cause a division inside Toyota, in which the Japanese may look at their American colleagues as untrustworthy.

Americans may begin thinking there are greater opportunities working for a U.S. company. Yes, it means moving to Detroit, but you can sell your shack in California for \$900,000 and buy a palace in suburban Detroit, for \$400,000. Consumer Reports magazine just dumped on Toyota--a first in recent decades--and the criticism received wide publicity on TV and in the press. Toyota still has high overall rankings in CR tests, but this slippage is not good news. The new Honda Accord is a direct challenge to Toyota's Camry, which is currently the best-selling car in the U.S. The Camry was all-new last year, but this revised Honda has a chance at winning the top spot in 2008. Toyota recently settled a sexual harassment suit against one of its executives in New York, but not before the media had a field day. A New York tabloid made fun of the Toyota slogan with a huge front-page headline, "Oh, what a feeling." As part of the ensuing shakeup and public relations effort, the company sent Jim Press, the head of Toyota in America and member of the parent company board of directors, to New York from Los Angeles. The word is that Press did not like that assignment. Press recently quit Toyota and joined Chrysler. Skid Control Currency swings are another problem. Even though it has extensive U.S. manufacturing operations, Toyota still ships a large number of cars and trucks here from Japan, and the strengthening Japanese yen raises the cost and cuts profits. The company is a big producer in Canada, so the stronger Canadian dollar also nicks earnings. Toyota's profits are the highest in the auto industry, but every little squeeze counts. Toyota, of course, is not the only manufacturer dealing with currency problems, but these irksome shifts come at a bad time. Recalls are another problem, and quite likely a function of Toyota's rapid expansion and turnover of new models. In 2005, Toyota recalled 2.2 million vehicles in the U.S., which was more than it sold that year. This number dropped off to 602,000 in 2006 and 558,000 so far this year. Leading the current list is a recall of 535,000 big Tundra pickups and Sequoia SUVs for lower ball joint wear and failure. Tom Friedman, the New York Times columnist with two Pulitzer Prizes, who worshiped Toyota as the Green God, turned against the company. Friedman, an expert on the Middle East, preaches about conserving energy. He had been a big fan of Toyota and its Prius as part of the answer to the energy problem and the dangers of our reliance on oil. Friedman changed his mind when Toyota joined all the automakers in opposing a 35-miles-per-gallon rule for all vehicles. The Union of Concerned Scientists criticized the company for the same reason. Does all this mean the end of Toyota's drive to capture leadership in this industry? No, but let's not forget that leadership has its own perils.