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Following is a summary of the articles from major news outlets pertaining to safety issues for the week of April 7. The articles are attached:

Summary

REDACTED - RELEVANCY

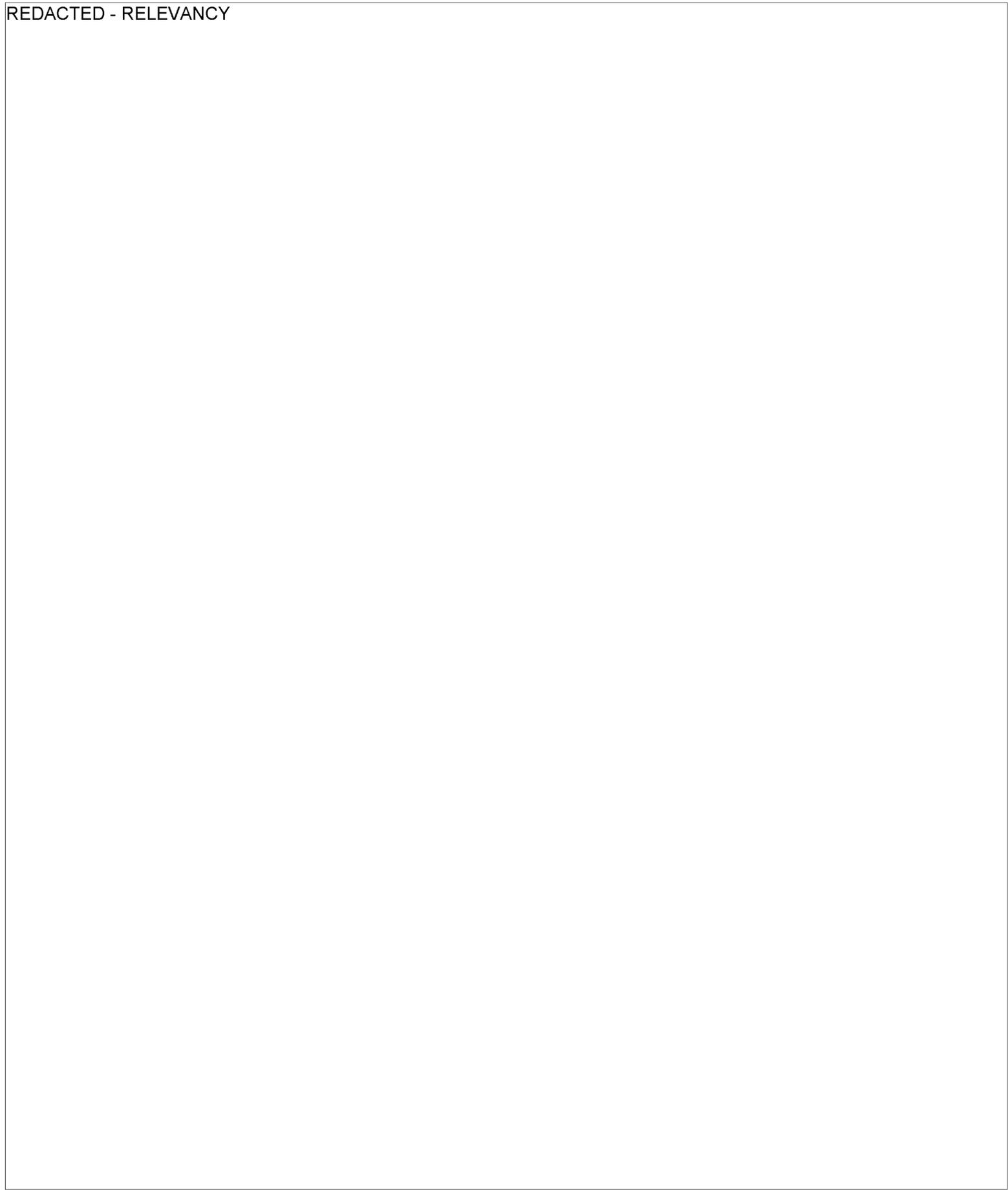
“Toyota Pickup Probe Pushed” Article 2 *Detroit Free Press* (April 7, 2008):

- At a customer's urging, NHTSA launched an investigation into 2006 and 2007 Tacoma pickups over sudden acceleration -- the fourth such look in three years at Toyota models over similar complaints.
- The Tacoma cases have yet to suggest a technical explanation.
- Before last October's recall of Toyota and Lexus floor mats in Camry and ES 350 sedans, NHTSA had triggered only two other similar recalls since 1989.
- Attorneys and safety advocates argue that sudden acceleration complaints are symptoms of defects, including electronic failures vehicle-control systems that may leave no trace and can't be easily reproduced
- NHTSA began receiving complaints about the current Tacoma and sudden acceleration in late 2005.
- Without a clear cause, a recall seems unlikely no matter how many drivers complain.

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Attachments: Safety News Articles

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TOYOTA

Monday 7-
Apr-2008

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Toyota pickup probe pushed

Sudden acceleration claims hard to pin down

Detroit Free Press 04/07/2008

Author: Justin Hyde

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It's a wonder [REDACTED] walked away from the crash that turned his new **Toyota** Tacoma pickup into an unrecognizable mush of metal, plastic and dirt. But [REDACTED] has a different wonder -- why **Toyota** doesn't believe his complaints of sudden acceleration.

[REDACTED] a retired vehicle theft investigator, describes driving down a rain-slicked freeway north of Nashville last June when he tapped the brakes to avoid another car. Instead of slowing, he says, the engine revved, spinning out the truck's rear wheels. The truck ran off the road, jumped an embankment and rolled several times before coming to rest on its side.

His crash is one of eight in a passel of 33 complaints to federal regulators that has restarted a decades-old debate about whether sudden acceleration claims reflect vehicle defects or mental ones. At a customer's urging, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration launched an investigation into 2006 and 2007 Tacoma pickups over sudden acceleration -- the fourth such look in three years at **Toyota** models over similar complaints.

The Tacoma cases have yet to suggest a technical explanation. Over the past eight years, the agency has closed at least six investigations into reports of unexpected or uncontrolled acceleration in vehicles without finding evidence of defects.

On the day of the crash, [REDACTED] was on his way to a **Toyota** dealership to have it examined for uncontrolled acceleration. Since April 2007, he had sent letters to **Toyota**, dealers and his insurance company detailing several instances where he says the engine surged when he hit the brake, including a couple of cases where he had to mash the pedal to keep the vehicle under control.

"**Toyota** has said to us they've found nothing wrong with the truck and it's our fault," [REDACTED] said, referring to about a dozen Tacoma owners with similar complaints. "They're basically calling us all stupid."

Federal officials and automakers maintain that without evidence of a problem, the most

http://tmalive.tma.toyota.com/toyota/story.cfm?story_id=2357596

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likely answer will always be driver error. Before last October's recall of **Toyota** and Lexus floor mats in Camry and ES 350 sedans, the NHTSA had triggered only two other similar recalls since 1989.

"Sudden acceleration is a tough issue," said Ricardo Martinez, a doctor who was the chief NHTSA administrator from 1994 to 1999. "If a crash occurs, you always blame it on the vehicle, but most always the investigation found that wasn't the case."

Toyota spokesman Bill Kwong says the company has found no problems with the Tacoma that would explain the complaints.

"We don't feel it's an issue with the vehicle," he said. Regulators "get sudden acceleration complaints from consumers for various manufacturers ... and in most cases they have found it's a misapplication of the pedals by the driver."

But attorneys and safety advocates argue that sudden acceleration complaints are symptoms of defects, including electronic failures in increasingly complex vehicle-control systems that may leave no trace and can't be easily reproduced by a mechanic.

If there "were truly human error, there would be a proportional distribution across models," said Clarence Ditlow, who has spent years researching sudden acceleration as head of the Center for Auto Safety in Washington. "It's very difficult to explain how some makes and models have higher numbers of complaints than others absent some flaw in the vehicle."

The NHTSA began receiving complaints about the current Tacoma and sudden acceleration in late 2005. Some owners report trucks surging after they put on the brakes, or while at a stoplight. Others say their Tacoma surged while they were driving. A few said they were barely able to control the vehicle using the brakes.

None of the complaints suggest a clear cause, and those who say they've had their trucks inspected by a mechanic report no problems found.

The agency did not review the complaints until it was petitioned to do so by [REDACTED] a retired journalist in Montana. After two incidents of uncontrolled acceleration with his 2006 Tacoma within 2 hours in January, [REDACTED] examined the NHTSA's online database.

[REDACTED] said his research showed that compared with the mass of Tacoma complaints, including six injuries, there were only four reports of sudden acceleration from owners of all other 2006 and 2007 pickups. His **Toyota** dealer found no problem, and **Toyota** declined to examine the truck.

The NHTSA has examined [REDACTED] truck and sent a request for data to **Toyota**. The agency doesn't comment on open investigations as a matter of practice, and **Toyota** says it's cooperating. The investigation is still in its early stages, and the NHTSA would need to take several additional steps before suggesting a recall.

But without a clear cause, a recall seems unlikely no matter how many drivers complain. From 2004 to 2007, the NHTSA closed three separate investigations into sudden acceleration by **Toyota** Camrys and Lexus ES330 models. In each probe, many owners complained of sudden acceleration and gave similar details.

And in each investigation, no mechanical trend was found, and the NHTSA closed the

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cases because of a lack of evidence.

The last time the NHTSA fully explored the issue of sudden acceleration complaints was in 1989, following years of dispute over vehicles such as the Audi 5000, the poster car for the problem because of a "60 Minutes" report in 1986.

After sorting through thousands of complaints and running its own vehicle tests, the agency found that where there was no mechanical evidence of a vehicle defect, "the inescapable conclusion is that these" cases "definitely involve the driver inadvertently pressing the accelerator instead of, or in addition to, the brake pedal."

Automakers cheered the ruling, but by that time, they had started installing brake-shift interlocks that forced drivers to apply a brake if they tried to put a vehicle in gear. Throughout the 1990s, the number of sudden acceleration complaints to the NHTSA steadily declined.

But consumer advocates and attorneys say the NHTSA closed its eyes rather than admit the problem. Tom Murray, an Ohio attorney who specializes in sudden acceleration cases, said automakers and the NHTSA did not want to acknowledge other possible causes of sudden acceleration, namely electrical interference. Murray says complaints rose as automakers stuffed new electronics in vehicles -- and fell after they learned how to better shield those electronics.

"NHTSA accepted" the "claim of Audi that the absence of proof is proof of absence," Murray said. "They made one of the most colossal blunders by saying 'We can't find a defect inside the vehicle after the fact; it must be the driver.' "

Murray said he has seen an uptick in complaints in recent years as more vehicles, including the Tacoma, began to use drive-by-wire systems -- where electronics replace mechanical connections between the pedals, engine and sometimes the brakes. He and Ditlow maintain that the NHTSA lacks the money to track down more complex electrical failures, especially those that might be random and leave no physical evidence.

"I always thought that when **Toyota** went to drive-by-wire, the likelihood of having sudden acceleration is going to increase," Ditlow said. To order a recall, federal law "doesn't say you have to find a failure mode, just a substantial number of failures."

Toyota: [External Affairs](#)

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