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News

NHTSA Ends Toyota Tacoma Investigation

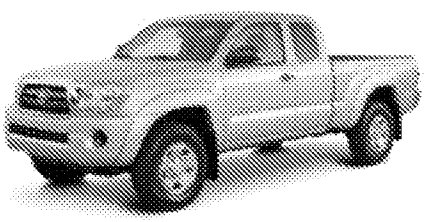
Decision a win for Toyota lobbying effort

By Joe Benton
ConsumerAffairs.com

September 3, 2008

Federal safety regulators have shut down their investigation of unintended acceleration in Toyota Tacoma pickup trucks that generated more than 400 consumer complaints by denying a petition by a Tacoma owner who said his truck accelerated without warning twice.

Toyota Tacoma



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- NHTSA Ends Toyota Tacoma Investigation
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The agency reported interviewing 64 Tacoma owners during the investigation who had complained to the agency about unintended acceleration before concluding that the complaints were the result of slight engine surge.

The NHTSA decision represents a victory for Toyota. The Japanese automaker had launched a lobbying offensive in Washington to limit the scope of the investigation, complaining in a letter to NHTSA that the Tacoma was the focus of hostile media coverage as well as consumer exaggeration.

"Toyota believes that it is likely that many of the consumer complaints about the general issue of unwanted acceleration as well as many of the complaints about this subject that have been received by Toyota were inspired by publicity," the automaker wrote NHTSA.

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More than 400 consumers complained to the federal safety agency about unintended and sudden acceleration in the Tacoma pickup. Reports to the agency documented 51 crashes and 12 injuries alleged to be caused by unintended acceleration.

Toyota claimed the engine surge was the result of minor engine speed changes.

A ConsumerAffairs.Com reader and Toyota Tacoma owner in Weaver, Alabama reported a different story. "It was jumping forward toward my house at every engine turn. I pushed in the clutch and took out the key," he reported.

Announcing the decision to end the investigation of unintended acceleration in the Tacoma, NHTSA reported on its Web site that in "those vehicles where the throttle control system did not perform as the owner believes it should have, the information suggesting a possible defect related to motor vehicle safety is quite limited."

"Additional investigation is unlikely to result in a finding that a defect related to motor vehicle safety exists," according to the agency.

Acceleration is controlled in the Tacoma by a drive-by-wire system with a computer replacing the traditional linkage between the accelerator pedal and the engine throttle-body which injects the fuel required for acceleration.

Toyota claimed the Tacoma computer can capture an error report if accelerator pedal and throttle are not working properly and the automaker said no error codes have turned up in vehicles inspected Toyota inspectors.

The investigation involved 775,000 Tacoma pickups sold between 2004 and 2008.

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