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Sent: 4/13/2009 6:16 AM

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Subject: BuzzAlert: New website Autocoverup.com highlights Toyota/Lexus unintended acceleration, gains traction in online discussion.

Hello-

Please note over the past several days, there is increased internet buzz regarding potential Toyota/Lexus sudden acceleration problems. The catalyst to this discussion is appears to be a website called Autocoverup.com, which highlights instances in which Toyota or Lexus vehicles have demonstrated "sudden" or "unexpected" acceleration problems. In one case, Autocoverup.com hosts a secretly recorded conversation between an affected owner and a Lexus technician, in which the technician notes having experienced a problem with the IS 250 sudden acceleration as well.

It appears the Autocoverup.com website appears to have been created on April 5, 2009 by DomainsByProxy.com 15111 N. Hayden Rd., Ste 160, PMB 353 Scottsdale, Arizona85260United States

The conversation that surrounds the topic is polarized in opinion. Several consumers question the intent of the individual or individuals who post the Autocoverup.com link on multiple enthusiast messages forums under the following usernames: matty2009, suddenacceleration, script, suddengo, or suddenacc. Still, others express concern that there may indeed be a serious computer or cruise control problem with the Toyotaand Lexus vehicles. Questions arise regarding role that emissions controls and the electronic nature of the throttle may play. Some owners – of Toyota, Lexus, and other makes as well – recount their experiences with sudden acceleration. Many online individuals echo opinions that driver error is often the cause of these unintended acceleration episodes. Buzz appears moderate in overall volume, but sustains momentum today after having been posted to TheTruthAboutCars.com website on Saturday April 11, 2009. This has not yet reached more highly trafficked venues such as Autoblog.com or Jalopnik.com.

Note: This alert has also been distributed to the Toyota Corporate Communications team.

Discussion Links:

<http://autocoverup.com/>

<http://www.gminsidenews.com/forums/f19/sudden-acceleration-my-is250-lexus-tech-busted-tape-77756/>

<http://forums.caranddriver.com/showthread.php?t=1629518>

<http://us.lexusownersclub.com/forums/index.php?showtopic=56647&mode=linear>

<http://www.autotalk.com/forums/46lexus/lexus-sudden-acceleration-i-trapped-car-9279.html>

<http://forums.motivemag.com/zerthread?id=4337223&page=1>

<http://www.carforums.net/showthread.php?p=817954#post817954>

<http://www.toyotanation.com/forum/showthread.php?t=293628>

<http://forums.automobilemag.com/70/7567875/lexus/lexus-video/index.html>

<http://www.thetruthaboutcars.com/toyota-unintended-acceleration-or-sticky-floor-mats/>

<http://news.autoglobe.com/2009/04/11/toyota-unintended-acceleration-or-sticky-floor-mats/>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NleowbPdB4> (approx 550 views @ 4/12/2009)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o3lq3839HdA> (approx 1,200 views @ 4/12/2009)

Sample Verbatim Comments

"Hey guys, please see the video on <http://autocoverup.com> He recorded the conversation because a Lexus rep was changing his opinion on the IS250 having sudden acceleration after he talked to the GM.

The crazy part is the lexus rep had sudden acceleration in his IS250 and he is on tape describing what happened.

The car raced down the highway over 90mph, the brakes would not work and the brake light was flashing on and off on the dash..how can a floor mat cause that? sounds like a computer glitch to me.

has anyone else had sudden acceleration ?"

GMInsideNews.com, April 9, 2009

"In almost every single case of "sudden acceleration" the culprit was sitting behind the wheel.

Usually incapable drivers they punch the gas, think it is the brake so they stand on it and kill someone, usually they don't even know what day of the week it is anymore...

I find it hard to believe the situation is real to be honest.

Brakes on any vehicle are more powerful than the engine. Try it stand on both pedals the car won't move.

It is not required to press the brakes to get into neutral.

The brake interlock only requires "touching" the pedal anyway.

90 mph is sudden acceleration, I call it cruising speed...

I call BS!

Essentially you are saying there is not only a failure of the throttle system, but somehow it has failed and gone to open, despite the many failsafe apparatus designed to send the throttle closed not open in any trouble event

Then somehow the brakes have failed as well. But the brake system is purely mechanical at the basic level. If you press the pedal the fluid moves and brings the pads together... there is no way for this to fail unless there is a mechanical failure in not just one, but all the brake lines... The power assist is by vacuum, it is not even controlled by anything. The hose could pop off but there would still be residual vacuum, and if that got depleted by you pressing the brakes several times, they would still work but just be firmer."

GMInsideNews.com, April 10, 2009

"Wow, I can't believe some of the "it's all your fault" stuff in this thread. I mean, shouldn't a GM forum be a little more open to defects on foreign cars?"

Secondly, in the States it's up to the individual state as to the laws regarding conversation recording. In Texas, only one party of the conversation has to know it's being recorded, otherwise it would pretty much defeat the whole purpose.

Thirdly, in today's computer controlled cars everything from the throttle to the automatic transmission to the ignition are controlled by electronics. The throttle is controlled by an Accelerator Pedal Position sensor which is basically a set of potentiometers. The Transmission Range Selector is electronic and the shifter simply tells the control module what you'd like to do (try shifting to first or reverse while driving down the highway in a modern car). The push button ignitions have no mechanical linkage whatsoever, so again you are at the mercy of the control module to shut the engine off. On most push button ignitions you can push the button three times within 5 seconds or press and hold the button to shut the car down in an emergency.

It's obvious that it's not always floor mats causing these problems. If I were you Matt, I'd take the floor mats out of the car and drive it quite a bit to duplicate the problem. When it happens again shift to neutral and hold the ignition button down. If that doesn't work ride the barrier wall and steer into it to stop the car. I wouldn't let anyone drive it or ride in it besides yourself."

GMInsideNews.com, April 10, 2009

"Uncontrollable acceleration, coupled with brake failure plus a "cover up" by Lexus?

Right...

Until I see a video showing someone applying the brakes while the car is continuing to accelerate, I'm just going to assume that this is total BS. To add to that, the original poster has spammed this story to about a dozen other automotive forums.

Good luck with the lawsuit."

CarandDriver.com, April 10, 2009

I'm not surprised.....you can google any car company and place "sudden acceleration" behind it and you will find millions of sites like these.

I'm sure it's all driver error or improperly installed floor mats.....but.....if not...there is an easy fix in any car... The transmission in any car is easily put into neutral at any speed.

US.Lexusownersclub.com, April 7, 2009

"This guy has been going around all kinds of car forums spamming this story about his Lexus almost killing him...

Haven't seen it on here yet so I might as well post it before he gets here .

<http://autocoverup.com/>

Scary stuff."

Motivemag.com, April 9, 2009

"I read ALL the accounts. Interesting. one or two people id say they were idiots, but that is a LOT of accounts of identical circumstances.

My real question is whats wrong with the brakes? I would imagine ANY braking system should be able to resist the full brunt of the engine. Even at highway speeds.

People claim to have had the car rocket away from 1-5 mph to 40-60 mph!!!

Is this a HEMI lexus? or does the Lexus have Teflon brakes?"

Motivemag.com, April 10, 2009

"Lexus is crap. Hope this makes national headlines."

Motivemag.com, April 10, 2009

"Unintended acceleration incidents occur in all makes and models with automatic transmissions. However, some cars have a higher rate of incidents, due to pedal placement that may make hitting the wrong pedal easier (didn't the infamous Audi 5000 have the accelerator and brake pedals very close together?).

Unintended acceleration incidents tend not to happen with manual transmissions since most such incidents happen when parking. With a manual, the driver when parking hits the clutch with the brake simultaneously; hitting the accelerator by mistake will just cause lack of braking (along with the engine revving up disconnected from the wheels due to the clutch being depressed) rather than sudden acceleration. The result of that is likely to merely to test the 2.5mph bumpers rather than a more severe crash.

If the accelerator sticks on the road, the driver should be able to just press the clutch (manual) or shift to neutral (manual or automatic) to disconnect the engine from the wheels. Then use the brakes (or the parking brake if the service brakes simultaneously failed) to stop the car."

Motivemag.com, April 10, 2009

"Brake stands prove that the brakes are stronger than the engine. The car is stopped when the wheels are spinning. The wheels only spin if you modulate the brake pedal to allow it.

As for this Lexus stuff, I call BS. AFAIK no one has ever proved a case of unintended acceleration that wasn't due to pedal confusion. At best, the floor mat might be fouling both pedals, and the driver is simply not pressing the brake hard enough to overcome it. You'd be surprised how meek people are with their brake applications, even in an emergency. Either way, it's user error.

The only exception I'm aware of occurred 10-15 years ago when a police department tapped into their Crown Vics' CHMSL wires to run auxiliary lights. This caused the cruise control to stay on when the brakes were applied because the signal to the computer was altered. Again, user error."

Motivemag.com, April 10, 2009

"2+ years with my 2007 Camry and it has never displayed any of the signs that you are describing. On the other hand, I have never had more than one set of floor mats in the vehicle at once either.

I find your website full of people that seem to offer nothing but a picture of an ignorant American who are not smart enough to realize that you shouldn't have more than one set of floor mats in at once.

My opinion... (which is what you are asking for): As with the majority of traffic accidents- they are due to user error.

ToyotaNation.com, April 8, 2009

"Toyota is not known for cover ups, but if they do one and the truth is they have made a defect, their high quality rep will be in the toilet. It will be better for them to come clean and fix it if there is a real issue.

TruthAboutcars.com, April 11, 2009

"Sorry, but any time I hear that the engine is racing out of control and that the brakes fail at the same time, it's gotta be driver error. These are two almost completely unrelated systems, that are almost impossible to comprehend failing at the same time.

The brakes are still operable without any engine power or electricity whatsoever. The only way for them to fail is for a hydraulic line to leak or be cut, and all the fluid pumped out. The test for this is easy enough: If there is still fluid in master and slave cylinders after a supposed total brake failure, then it almost has to be driver error.

It seems difficult to comprehend, but in a panic situation, people can and often make errors that they wouldn't otherwise do (e.g. confusing the accelerator pedal for the brake pedal). People obviously don't want to admit to making such a mistake, and in most cases, genuinely believe that they were pushing the brake pedal when in fact they were not.

As an IS250 owner with factory winter mats, I've got to concur at least with that part of the video. With retaining hooks and nubs, there is no way they are going to move around like Toyota is suggesting.

TruthAboutcars.com, April 11, 2009

"I watched the video and didn't see any "unintended acceleration". The guy "proved" the mat likely didn't catch the accelerator pedal, but he didn't "prove" to me there's anything wrong with his IS 250.

Just drove a brand new '09 Civic Si yesterday for PDI, and was surprised while slowing to a stop that the revs would not drop and had to push pretty hard on the brakes at first until my mind caught up and I pushed in the clutch pedal. Then remembered I just got a new pair of work boots whose soles are a bit wider than my last pair. Only took a second for me to realize I need to reposition my feet to adjust for different shoes. I'd guess that's one of the biggest causes of "unintended acceleration"

TruthAboutcars.com, April 11, 2009

"I was driving a friend's ES and this happened. Thankfully I was in park. What had happened was the latch that secures the mat in place can come off easily if you adjust the seats, namely move them forward. Since he's got a good foot on me, I naturally had to scoot the driver's seat forward to reach the controls, and hence the mat came loose.

So, it's certainly possible. And yeah, he had the all-weather floor mats."

TruthAboutcars.com, April 11, 2009

"there is a glitch with these toyotas/lexi with the throttle by wire system. i'm a smog tech out in california and trying to smog these things on the dyno is a real bear. there's an online smog tech forum to which i belong and it's a well know fact that there is some sort of glitch, most likely related to the throttle by wire system.

the problem i see is with the car on the dyno, (to disabled if applicable,) and it's very near impossible to keep the car at a steady speed. california smog requires the smog tech to keep the car at a steady speed and rpm for a certain amount of time and these throttle by wire cars are near impossible; throttle by wire cars by other marques don't seem to have this problem. the cars speed up and/or slow down on their own even if your right foot is dead steady and doesn't move. i don't really know what's causing this but it is not out of the realm of possibility, (at least for me,) that these things can randomly accelerate/decelerate on their own.

i personally think that the throttle cable was a great thing and am sad to see it's demise...there's something a bit unsettling about the idea of the accelerator pedal not being physically connected to the throttle plate."

TruthAboutcars.com, April 11, 2009

"Some thoughts:

- The cruise control system seems to be universally blamed, but many of the complaints on autocoverup don't mention cruise being used or occurred at speeds where using cruise would be suicidal. It is of course possible that the cruise is activating of its own accord, though.

- The problem with any conspiracy theory is that it expects people to be way more silent than they ever actually are. Why isn't there any "Hi, I'm an engineer for Toyota; I worked on the ECU programming, and yeah, the system is a complete deathtrap. At certain speeds, the thingy interacts with the other thingy and the whole thing goes out of control. The bastards in management wouldn't even let it throw an exception."

- On a related note, there's a lot of smart engineers out there who like to take things apart, and quite a handful of people who make their money by taking the engine computer apart and fooling with it. They don't seem to have any specifically bright ideas, either.

- The consistent theme from Toyota seems to be "We're very carefully saying you're not an idiot, but we can't seem to find anything wrong with these cars." If they did a full safety inquiry, and said they still couldn't find anything wrong, would anyone believe them? This is clearly a job for NHTSA, or as mentioned, some private reverse engineering.

- A lot of the complaints mention putting the car in park to slow it down, which per my understanding will either do nothing or destroy your transmission, then do nothing.

- Is a >200hp FWD car even controllable at WOT? I can't say I've ever done it, but between supposedly standing on the brakes, torque at the drive wheels, and the general understeer that happens around 90mph, these people seem to be displaying some impressive steering abilities for not knowing how to put the car in neutral. Either that, or modern safety nannies are way more effective than I could have imagined. Also, only applies to FWD models in contention."

TruthAboutcars.com, April 12, 2009

Regards-

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