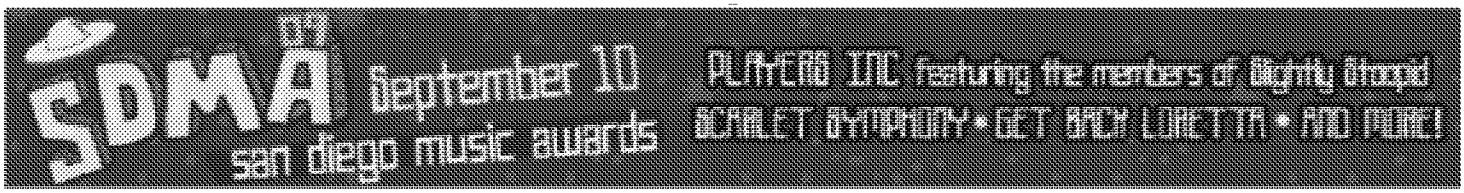

Fiery crash in Santee could have been caused by faulty floor mat

By Staff, City News Service

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A fiery crash in Santee that killed an off-duty California Highway Patrol officer, his wife, daughter and brother-in-law may have been caused by a floor mat that locked down their vehicle's gas pedal, it was reported Thursday.

[redacted] and his wife [redacted] both 45, their 13-year-old daughter, [redacted] and 38-year-old brother-in-law, [redacted], were killed Aug. 28 after someone inside their 2009 Lexus called 911, saying the accelerator was stuck.

The Lexus was a loaner from Bob Baker Lexus in El Cajon while their vehicle was being serviced, authorities said.

Witnesses said the vehicle was going more than 100 mph on state Route 125 shortly before it collided with an SUV, crashed through a fence and ended up on fire in the bed of the San Diego River.

A preliminary investigation revealed the Lexus was equipped with "all-weather" floor mats, designed for Lexus vehicles made between 2004 and 2009, lead sheriff's investigator Sgt. Scott Hills told The San Diego Union-Tribune.

All-weather mats installed in 2007 and 2008 models of the Lexus ES 350 were recalled by Toyota in November 2007 due to complaints that, if not properly installed, the mats could slide forward and trap the gas pedal.

Hill told the Union-Tribune that when the mat is not in the right position and the accelerator is pushed down, it becomes caught between ribs of the rubber mat and will not release.

The sheriff's department, CHP and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration are all investigating the cause of the crash. Recovered from the wreckage were the brakes, the accelerator and the floors mats, Hill told the Union-Tribune.

A full report on the cause of the crash should be complete in a few weeks, he said.

Tags: California Highway Patrol, floor mats, Lexus ES 350, [redacted], Santee, SDNN

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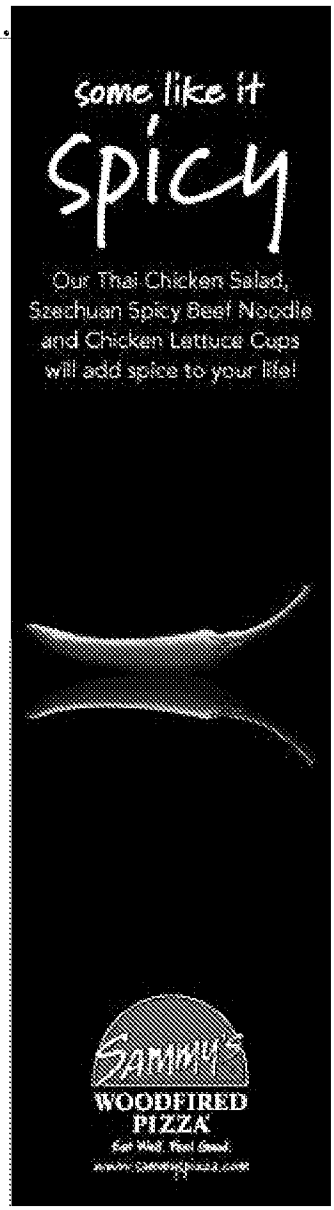

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