

ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH CONGRESS
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE
2125 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6115

Majority (202) 225-2927
Minority (202) 225-3641

February 2, 2010

Mr. James E. Lentz
President and Chief Operating Officer
Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A., Inc.
19001 South Western Avenue
Torrance, CA 90501

Dear Mr. Lentz:

We are writing to seek additional information about several statements you made yesterday on national television about recent recalls of Toyota vehicles.

In an appearance on the Today Show, you stated that Toyota has “studied the events of unintended acceleration, and that [the company] is quite clear that it has come down to two different issues,” one addressed by the fall 2009 recall designed to prevent entrapment of accelerator pedals in floor mats and the other addressed by last week’s recall of vehicles with parts that can cause accelerator pedals to stick. In an appearance on CNBC, you repeated this claim and reported that Toyota is “very confident that the fix in place is going to stop what’s going on.”

Your public statements are different than the representations that Toyota officials made on January 27, 2010, when they met with staff of the Committee on Energy and Commerce. When Committee staff inquired whether Toyota could be certain that floor mat entrapment and sticking accelerator pedals fully explained reports of unintended acceleration in Toyota vehicles, the Toyota officials present responded that causes of unintended acceleration are “very, very hard to identify.” Furthermore, at that meeting, Toyota officials indicated that sticking accelerator pedals are unlikely to be responsible for the sensational stories of drivers losing control over acceleration as their cars race to 60 miles per hour or higher. The officials said that condensation build-up in a “sticky pedal” can cause the accelerator to become lodged in a slightly depressed position, but they said that this would not lead to full-throttle acceleration.

The Toyota officials did tell the Committee staff that accelerator pedals entrapped by all-weather floor mats could cause high-speed acceleration. There are, however, well-publicized, high-speed unintended acceleration events in Toyota vehicles that do not appear to have been caused by all-weather floor mats.

We request that you clarify your statement about the role of sticking accelerator pedals in unintended acceleration of Toyota vehicles. If Toyota now believes that sticking accelerator pedals are responsible for incidents of sudden, high-speed acceleration, we ask that you provide the Committee with any new evidence that became available to Toyota following the briefing on January 27, 2010. In addition, we ask that you please provide the Committee with any analyses and documents that support a conclusion that “sticky pedals” have caused sudden high-speed acceleration. If Toyota has any analyses or documents that conflict in whole or in part with this conclusion, please provide those to the Committee.

You also stated in appearances on the Today Show and on CNBC that Toyota first became aware of sticking accelerator pedals in its vehicles in “late October” of 2009. During the meeting with Committee staff, Toyota officials stated that the company first learned of this problem through reports of sticking pedals in vehicles in England and Ireland in April or May of 2009. Please clarify when Toyota first became aware of sticking accelerator pedals, when it began investigating the problem, and provide the Committee with all relevant documents.

On the Today Show, when asked whether electronics in Toyota vehicles could be causing unintended acceleration, you replied that electronics were not to blame and that both Toyota and “other independents” had “thoroughly” tested your vehicles’ electronics systems. On CNBC, you reiterated this conclusion. When you were asked whether “there is a gremlin in the electronics system that is causing these problems,” you said: “We’re confident that there is not. We’ve tested it, outside agencies have tested it.” In a brief interview on ABC News, you insisted that you are “confident there are no electronic problems.” Please provide to the Committee all analyses and documents that substantiate this claim. If Toyota has any analyses or documents that conflict in whole or in part with this claim, please provide those to the Committee too.

We request that you provide the analyses and documents substantiating your public claims by Friday, February 5. If Toyota has any analyses and documents conflicting with the claims, we request that you provide them at the same time, although if you are not able to complete a search for conflicting analyses and documents by February 5, they can be provided to the Committee by February 12, along with the documents requested in our letter of January 28, 2010. Please mark and provide these documents separately from the documents that you provide in response to the January 28, 2010, letter.

An attachment to this letter provides additional information on how to respond to the Committee’s request. If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Anne Tindall with the Committee staff at (202) 226-2424.

Sincerely,



Henry A. Waxman
Chairman



Bart Stupak
Chairman
Subcommittee on Oversight
and Investigations

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February 2, 2010
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Attachment

cc: The Honorable Joe Barton, Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Commerce

cc: The Honorable Greg Walden, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations