



Toyota Suspends Sales of Lexus SUV After Consumer Reports’ “Don’t Buy” Rating

Written On April 19, 2010 By [Bob Kraft](#)

The latest chapter of Toyota’s safety crisis began last week with Consumer Reports’ announcement that it was giving a rare “Don’t Buy” rating to the Lexus GX-460, which Toyota manufactures. Coverage of this and the resultant halt in production of the model generated significant coverage.

NBC Nightly News (4/13, story 2, 2:40, Williams) reported that “Lexus is temporarily suspending sales” of the SUV “after Consumer Reports issued a warning that it could tip over in certain situations, posing what Consumer Reports calls a safety risk.” Consumer Reports engineers faulted the vehicle’s electronic stability control. “Despite the GX-460 meeting all Federal safety standards, Lexus issued a statement late today” announcing the sales pause.

ABC World News (4/13, story 5, 1:30, Sawyer) called the rating “an extremely rare safety move by a major watchdog group,” noting that “for the first time in almost ten years, Consumer Reports is telling people not to buy a” vehicle. Jake Fisher, Senior Automotive Engineer, Consumer Reports: “I’ve been here at Consumer Reports for 11 years. I have never seen an SUV do anything this bad.”

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The AP (4/14, 9:33 PM, Strumpf, Thomas) reported that the “rare ‘Don’t Buy’ warning” came “amid concerns the large SUV has handling problems that could cause it to roll over during sharp turns.”

Toyota announced that it is conducting its own tests, the AP notes, adding, “The decision to stop selling the SUV is the latest blow to Toyota’s tarnished safety reputation after the recall of millions of cars and trucks over gas pedals that are too slow to retract or that can become stuck under floor mats.” This decision is seen as an “attempt to respond more quickly to safety concerns” on Toyota’s part.

The New York Times (4/14, B1, Jensen) reported that after Consumer Reports announced the rating, “Toyota quickly suspended sales...just hours” later. ““We are taking the situation with the GX 460 very seriously and are determined to identify and correct the issue Consumer Reports identified,’ Mark S. Templin, the Lexus group vice president and general manager said in a statement.” In lieu of a full recall, Lexus dealers are offering loaner cars to impacted drivers. Meanwhile, NHTSA “said in a statement on Tuesday that it was in communication with Consumer Reports and Lexus. The agency’s files, as of Tuesday, showed no record of consumer complaints related to the 2010 Lexus GX 460.” The “don’t buy” rating was issued after engineers considered whether they “would want their families in the vehicle.”

Bloomberg News (4/14, Ohnsman) reported that the situation “complicates” Toyota’s damage control efforts, as it faces “congressional hearings and a rebuke by” Secretary LaHood over its response to its sticky accelerator issues.

NHTSA has logged 37 complaints of hesitant acceleration in Lexus models.

The New York Times (4/14, Maynard) reported that in addition to reports in Canada of Lexus models that-instead of accelerating suddenly-have “hesitated or slowed” when the gas pedal is pressed, NHTSA’s “defects data base shows 37 consumer complaints

of similar problems on the 2004 ES 330 and 26 complaints on the 2005 model. Repeatedly, drivers said that after they noticed the problem they were told by their dealers that the situation was normal and that the car, one of a number of Lexus models that introduced electronic acceleration controls, was simply learning to recognize a driver's habits."

More Toyota drivers report post-recall sudden acceleration. USA Today (4/14, O'Donnell, Huggins) reports that some 131 Toyota drivers have "daily" logged NHTSA complaints of "unintended acceleration after their recalled vehicles were repaired at dealerships." The piece notes that these complaints "come as Toyota continues to contend mechanical, and not electronics, issues are to blame. ...

NHTSA and Toyota are analyzing data and vehicles to 'assess whether the recall remedies are being applied correctly and whether they are able to prevent the problems they were designed to address,' NHTSA said in a statement Tuesday. In two cases, NHTSA says, it appears improper repairs were made, but it is trying to determine whether the problem was human error or the fix itself."

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