



## NHTSA Says Toyota Acceleration Defect Linked to 34 Fatalities

Written On February 17, 2010 By [Bob Kraft](#)

Here's the latest roundup of Toyota recall news reports:

[NBC Nightly News](#) (2/15, story 7, 0:25, Williams) reported, "Federal safety officials said today the number of deaths that could be linked to sudden acceleration of Toyotas is now up to 34, based on consumer complaints they've received. The National Highway Transportation Safety Administration says it's normal for complaints to increase after people get word of a recall as more people become aware of safety defects that could have contributed to accidents in the past." The [CBS Evening News](#) (2/15, story 3, 0:20, Rodriguez) also noted the NHTSA announcement in a similarly brief report.

[USA Today](#) (2/16, Carty) reports NHTSA "has received complaints alleging an additional 21 fatalities linked to Toyota's sudden-acceleration incidents," which "brings to 34 the total number of fatalities in 26 accidents that complaints to NHTSA allege are linked to sudden acceleration by Toyota products." NHTSA "also has seen a jump in brake-related complaints for the 2010 Toyota Prius. When NHTSA began investigating problems with Prius brakes, it had 124 consumer complaints in its database," but "since the investigation was opened Feb. 3 and publicized, nearly 1,000 more complaints have been filed."

According to the [AP](#) (2/16, Thomas), "The new complaints reflect the heightened awareness of the massive recalls among the public and underscore a flurry of lawsuits on behalf of drivers alleging deaths

Kraft & Associates  
2777 Stemmons Freeway  
Suite 1300  
Dallas, Texas 75207  
Toll Free: (800) 989-9999  
FAX: (214) 637-2118  
E-mail: [info@kraftlaw.com](mailto:info@kraftlaw.com)

and injuries in Toyota crashes.” The AP also reports that “the government has renewed an investigation into potential electromagnetic problems in vehicles built by Toyota and other manufacturers. Consumer groups have pointed to potential electrical problems while the company has said recalls to fix sticking gas pedals or accelerators that can become jammed will address the problem.”

The [Washington Post](#) (2/16, Dennis) adds that on Saturday, Toyota “announced a voluntary safety recall to inspect the front drive shaft on some 2010 Tacoma four-wheel-drive trucks. Officials said the front shaft in about 8,000 vehicles might include a component that has cracks created during the manufacturing process, which could lead to separation of the drive shaft at the joint portion.”

**USA Today says Toyota, NHTSA were slow to respond.** A [USA Today](#) (2/16) editorial relates the harrowing story of the fatal crash of a Lexus last year near San Diego which was recorded during a 911 call, noting that the occupants told dispatchers that the car was accelerating out of control. “In the past few weeks, acceleration and braking problems have been exposed in several Toyota vehicles. Worse, it has become clear that Toyota knew about acceleration problems for years – as did federal regulators – but did precious little either to correct those problems or to warn its customers.” Moreover, “NHTSA failed even to notice the trend evident in its own database until it was discovered by the L.A. Times. It repeatedly declined to fully probe sudden acceleration.” In an accompanying [op-ed](#), Toyota’s US COO James Lentz concedes that Toyota “has not lived up to the high standards our customers expect from us,” but counters that the company has vigorous safety standards.

**Toyota considering quality control overhaul.** The [Wall Street Journal](#) (2/16, Shirouzu) reports that Toyota is considering making improvements to its quality control procedures and its policies regarding informing the public about improvements.

**Recalls intensify row over Toyota “black box” data.** The [Wall Street Journal](#) (2/16, Searcey, Linebaugh) that Toyota’s recall crisis is drawing increased scrutiny to the data in “event data recorders,” or “black boxes,” that are installed in all newer Toyotas. The piece notes that plaintiffs’ attorneys and

Kraft & Associates  
2777 Stemmons Freeway  
Suite 1300  
Dallas, Texas 75207  
Toll Free: (800) 989-9999  
FAX: (214) 637-2118  
E-mail: [info@kraftlaw.com](mailto:info@kraftlaw.com)

safety activists are seeking access to the data recorded by the devices, but adds that Toyota only releases such information when compelled to do so by law.

***Toyota says Toyoda may not appear before Congress.*** The [AP](#) (2/16, Kageyama) reports that Toyota announced Monday that the firm “has still not decided whether” CEO Akio Toyoda “will appear before the U.S. Congress” when he visits the US in March, noting that Toyota “has been criticized as being slow in responding to the unfolding recall crisis,” while “calls have been growing for...Toyoda to answer questions from U.S. lawmakers. Toyoda told reporters last week that he planned to go to the U.S., mainly to talk to American workers and dealers. ... Criticized for initially being largely invisible, Toyoda has appeared at two recent news conferences, where he has apologized for the recalls and promised to be more responsive to customers.” The AP notes that House Oversight and Government Reform ranking GOP member Darrell Issa has called for Toyoda to testify before his panel. Meanwhile, [Reuters](#) (2/16) reports that Toyoda is scheduled to address reporters in Tokyo Wednesday about the firm’s recall efforts.

From the American Association for Justice news release.

Posted in [Consumer Information](#), [Product Liability or Medical Devices](#), [Vehicle Law or News](#) [Comments \(0\)](#)

Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA).

The Program continues to serve the State of Texas as an important “safety net” for individuals who have been denied health insurance coverage because of pre-existing conditions, can afford the Pool’s premiums, and do not have other coverage options