



U.S. May Set Rule Requiring Brake Override System

Written On March 4, 2010 By [Bob Kraft](#)

The Obama administration is considering requiring all automobiles to contain a brake override system intended to prevent sudden acceleration episodes like those that have led to the recall of millions of Toyotas, the Transportation secretary, Ray LaHood, said Tuesday. This was reported in the [New York Times](#), and excerpts of the article follow.

This sounds like a perfectly good idea to me. The only downside, other than the cost, would be to deny a few boy-racers the pleasure of powering through a turn with one foot on the accelerator and the other on the brake. That was great fun back in the days of stick-shift sports cars and youthful ignorance about the consequences of high-speed collisions. But we're all grown up now, right?

The override system is meant to deactivate the accelerator when the brake pedal is pressed. That will let the driver stop safely even if the car's throttle sticks open. Often called a "smart pedal," the feature is already found on many automobiles sold worldwide, including models from BMW, Chrysler, Mercedes-Benz, Nissan and Volkswagen.

Without the system, a car's computer might think a driver wants to keep accelerating, and ignore a driver's efforts to depress the brake pedal and stop the car. Once the system is installed, it will stop the car if both the brake pedal and accelerator pedal are depressed.

Toyota did not install the system on its cars for several years but has now begun putting it on Camry, Lexus and Avalon models. About 20 percent of its vehicles in North America have an override. Last week, the automaker said the system also would be installed on Tacoma, Venza and Sequoia vehicles.

Through February, the N.H.T.S.A. had received 43 complaints of fatal incidents that reportedly involve unintended acceleration in Toyota vehicles since 2000, the Department of Transportation said. The complaints, which cover 52 fatalities and 38 injuries, have not been confirmed by the department. Three quarters of the incidents were reported to the safety agency in the last four months, since Toyota's initial recall in October 2009.

On Tuesday, Toyota executives again apologized for the recall, promised to be more responsive to driver complaints as well as safety warnings from the government, and then assured lawmakers that it was taking steps to improve quality control.