

More

SEARCH

Home World U.S. Business Markets Tech Personal Finance Life & Style Opinion Careers Real Estate Small Business

Asia Europe Earnings Economy Health Law Autos Management Media & Marketing More Industries Columns & Blogs

TOP STORIES IN Business



U.S. Intensifies Toyota Probe



Mitsui Bets on U.S. Shale-Gas Project

Fortress Acquires Logan Circle

U. Ga

FEBRUARY 16, 2010, 11:17 P.M. ET

U.S. Intensifies Toyota Probe

Regulator Demands Internal Documents Before Hearings; Company to Idle Two Plants as Sales Fall

Article

Slideshow

Interactive Graphics

Comments

MORE IN AUTO INDUSTRY NEWS »

Email Print Save This f t + More + Text -

By JOSH MITCHELL And KATE LINEBAUGH

U.S. regulators stepped up their investigation of Toyota Motor Corp. on Tuesday, demanding documents from the Japanese auto maker to determine if it conducted recent safety recalls "in a timely manner."

Separately, Toyota said it plans to temporarily halt production at two U.S. plants as it adjusts inventory levels. The company expects that the recalls will reduce its North American sales by about 80,000 vehicles.



View Full Image

Lexington Herald-Leader/Zuma Press

Toyota plans to idle its Georgetown, Ky., sedan plant for up to four days.

The increasing pressure by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration on Toyota comes a week before two congressional panels plan to hold hearings on the car maker's troubles.

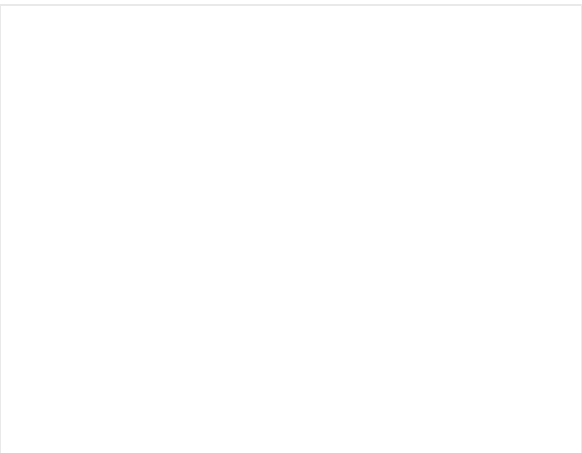
Some lawmakers have questioned NHTSA's response to the problems, and the agency has sought in recent weeks to show it is cracking down on safety concerns.

NHTSA Administrator David Strickland, who took office in January, is scheduled to testify next week in Washington, as is his boss,

U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood. Also scheduled to appear are an auto-safety expert and a consumer advocate who have faulted NHTSA for what they describe as being too soft on car makers when it comes to vehicle safety.

"NHTSA's actions related to the Toyota recalls trouble me, especially as reports of sudden acceleration in Toyota vehicles predate the recalls by at least two years," Rep. John Dingell (D., Mich.), a senior member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, said earlier this month. He said he plans to "ask frank questions" at the hearing his committee plans next week.

NHTSA said Tuesday it was using its statutory authority to compel Toyota to provide paperwork showing when and how the company learned of defects that led to the recall of about six million U.S. vehicles.



Companies within this Article

Toyota Motor Corp. ADS(TM) 76.01 -1.04 4:03p.m.

MARKETPLACE

Leasefax.com

Auto Loan Rates

Investing Tools

Video

Toyota, Another Recall 1:23

BMW's 'Tunnel' Ad 1:13

BMW's 'Scrapbook' Ad 1:13

Consumer Auto News

A U.S. law requires car makers to notify NHTSA within five days of spotting a safety defect and then promptly conduct a recall, the agency said. The law provides a maximum civil fine of as much as \$16.4 million but no auto maker has been fined more than \$1 million for a violation.

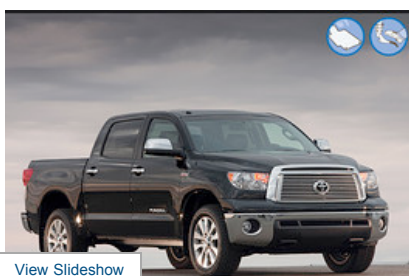
"Our top priority is safety and we expect that all manufacturers address automotive safety issues quickly and in a forthright manner," Mr. Strickland said in a statement announcing the stepped-up investigation.

NHTSA is examining three Toyota recalls for reports of sticky gas pedals and sudden acceleration. Consumer complaints to the agency allege that sudden acceleration in Toyotas led to 34 deaths.

Meantime, the company said it is suspending production for two weeks at its truck plant in San Antonio and for one day at its plant in Georgetown, Ky. Toyota is considering stopping production on three additional days in March and April at the Kentucky plant, where it makes Camry, Avalon and Venza sedans.

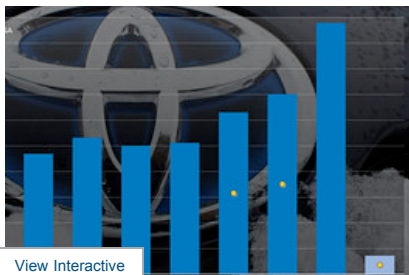
Affected Models

Review details on models in each recall.



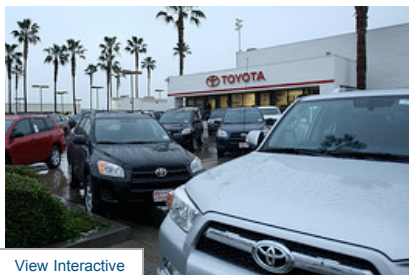
Escalating Problem

Track the NHTSA-Toyota relationship.



Recall Roadblocks

Timeline of major U.S. auto recalls



[More photos and interactive graphics](#)

"We can't allow inventory to build up too high," said Mike Goss, a Toyota spokesman. He said the affected workers will be paid and receive additional training on those days.. At its plant in Texas, which makes the large Tundra truck, Toyota plans to use the time to install the tooling to make its smaller Tacoma pickup, which the auto maker had planned to do during weekends in March, Mr. Goss said.

Toyota is moving production of the Tacoma truck from a plant in California that is closing at the end of March.

Toyota is reeling after recalling more than six million vehicles in the U.S. over the last five months, which cast a shadow over its reputation as a safety leader.

Last month, the Japanese company halted U.S. sales of eight models, including the Camry and Corolla, affected by a recall for sticky accelerators pedals, and earlier this month idled some of its North American production lines for a week. About 80% of the vehicles involved in the sales halt are back on sale after Toyota dealers repaired the gas pedals.

To win back consumer confidence and spawn sales, Toyota is looking into options such as a new buyer incentive program or enhanced warranty protection, according to three Toyota dealers briefed of the possibilities.

Write to Josh Mitchell at joshua.mitchell@dowjones.com and Kate Linebaugh at kate.linebaugh@wsj.com

- **Photos:** [Affected Models](#)

MORE IN [AUTO INDUSTRY NEWS](#)

[The Best Diesel SUVs](#)

[Cars Are Getting Scary Again](#)

[A Crisis Made in Japan](#)

[Top Cars for a Family Road Trip](#)

[Dear Valued Toyota Customer](#)

Most Popular

[Read](#) [Emailed](#) [Video](#) [Commented](#)

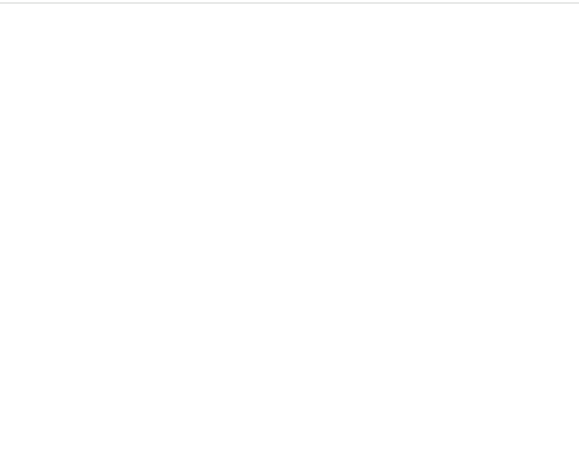
1. [Marine Walks Away From Shot to Head](#)
2. [Opinion: The Continuing Climate Meltdown](#)
3. [Investors Recruit Terminally Ill](#)
4. [Pressure on Iran Increases From U.S.](#)
5. [Dollar Up as Europe Reels](#)

[Most Read Articles Feed](#)

Latest Headlines

- [Budget Wielded to Cut Emissions](#)
- [Alabama Suspect Had Erratic History](#)
- [Races' Stakes: Control of Senate](#)
- [Bowles, Simpson to Head U.S. Debt Panel](#)
- [Defections Shake Up Climate Coalition](#)
- [Dutch Dairymen Cry Over Spilled Milk](#)
- [Regulators Step Up Toyota Probe](#)
- [Prison to Test Cellphone Jamming](#)
- [Climber's Body Recovered in Mount St. Helens Crater](#)
- [New York Gets Funding for Rail Center](#)

[More Headlines](#)



[Email](#) [Printer Friendly](#) [Order Reprints](#)

Share: [f](#) [t](#) [g+](#) [st](#) [dribbble](#) [in](#) [vk](#) [weibo](#)

The Official Kia® Site

Request a Kia® Vehicle Brochure Today! 5-Star Crash Safety Rating.
Kia.com/Safety

Toyota: 2010 Pricing

Buying a New Toyota? Find Discount Pricing in Your Area!
www.WhyPaySticker.com/2010/Toyota

Indian Supplier Report

Regional auto industry overview, supplier profiles, who supplies whom
www.supplierbusiness.com/india

Editors' Picks



Can Drivers Handle High-Tech Cars?



Fashion on the Fast Track



James Cameron Confirms He's Writing 'Avatar' Novel



A Downturn Downtown



What's a Gold Medal Worth?

[BACK TO TOP](#)

WSJ.com Account:

- [My Account](#)
- [Subscriber Billing Info](#)

Create an Account:

- [Register for Free](#)
- [Subscribe Now](#)

Help & Information Center:

- [Help](#)
- [Customer Service](#)
- [Contact Us](#)
- [New on WSJ.com](#)
- [Tour the new Journal](#)

About:

- [News Licensing](#)
- [Advertising](#)
- [Advertise Locally](#)
- [Conferences](#)
- [About Dow Jones](#)
- [Privacy Policy - Updated](#)
- [Subscriber Agreement & Terms of Use - Updated](#)
- [Copyright Policy](#)
- [Jobs at WSJ.com](#)

WSJ.com:

- [Site Map](#)
- [Home](#)
- [World](#)
- [U.S.](#)
- [Business](#)
- [Markets](#)
- [Market Data](#)
- [Tech](#)
- [Personal Finance](#)
- [Life & Style](#)
- [Opinion](#)
- [Autos](#)
- [Careers](#)
- [Real Estate](#)
- [Small Business](#)
- [Corrections](#)

Tools & Formats:

- [Today's Paper](#)
- [Video Center](#)
- [Graphics](#)
- [Columns](#)
- [Blogs](#)
- [Topics](#)
- [Guides](#)
- [Alerts](#)
- [Newsletters](#)
- [Mobile](#)
- [Podcasts](#)
- [RSS Feeds](#)
- [Journal Community](#)
- [WSJ on Twitter](#)
- [WSJ on Facebook](#)
- [My Journal](#)

Digital Network

- [WSJ.com](#)
- [Marketwatch.com](#)
- [Barrons.com](#)
- [SmartMoney.com](#)
- [AllThingsD.com](#)
- [FINS.com](#)
- [FILife.com](#)
- [BigCharts.com](#)
- [Virtual Stock Exchange](#)
- [WSJ U.S. Edition](#)
- [WSJ Asia Edition](#)
- [WSJ Europe Edition](#)
- [WSJ India Page](#)
- Foreign Language Editions:
 - [WSJ Chinese](#)
 - [WSJ Japanese](#)
 - [WSJ Portuguese](#)
 - [WSJ Spanish](#)