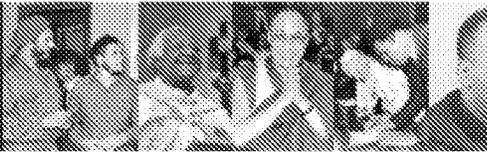


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## Business

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# Sudden Toyota speed-ups investigated

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WASHINGTON, April 7 (UPI) -- The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has begun an investigation into unexplained acceleration of Tacoma pickup trucks, the U.S. agency said.

Thirty-three of the Toyota truck owners have complained the vehicle suddenly accelerated on its own. Eight of the complaints involved crashes, the Detroit Free Press reported.

Sudden acceleration has been a mystery for car safety agencies for decades. Six previous investigations have closed without pinpointing any mechanical failure.

In a previous report the NHTSA found "the inescapable conclusion" was that drivers were pressing the gas pedal unintentionally.

But others say that does not explain the tendency of sudden acceleration complaints to come from owners of specific vehicles.

"Sudden acceleration is a tough issue," said Ricardo Martinez, former NHTSA chief administrator. "If a crash occurs, you always blame it on the vehicle, but most always the investigation found that wasn't the case."

Toyota has denied the issue is mechanical. "We don't feel it's an issue with the vehicle," said company spokesman Bill Kwong. "In most cases" of past years, "it's a misapplication of the pedals by the driver," he said.

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