

From: Joe Tetherow/=TMS/Toyota. Sent:4/27/2009 11:13 AM.
To: [-] Nancy Fein/=TMS/Toyota@Toyota.
Cc: [-] Bob Waltz/=TMS/Toyota@Toyota; Gary E Smith/=TMS/Toyota@Toyota; mike michels@toyota.com; john_hanson@toyota.com; Brian Lyons/=TMS/Toyota@Toyota.
Bcc: [-] .
Subject: Re: Fw: BuzzUpdate: Paul Knight/Houston Press Article and Toyota Prius/Unintended Acceleration.

Nancy --

Thanks very much for your quick response. So far, reaction to the negative story seems minimal, but that always has the potential to change.
It's interesting to note that half the customers cited in the story have not complained to Toyota about their alleged experiences.

I'll let you know if we have any further questions. Thanks again.

Joe

Joe Tetherow
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Nancy Fein/TMS/Toyota
04/27/2009 10:36 AM
To Joe Tetherow/TMS/Toyota@Toyota
cc Bob Waltz/TMS/Toyota@Toyota, Gary E Smith/TMS/Toyota@Toyota
Subject Fw: BuzzUpdate: Paul Knight/Houston Press Article and Toyota Prius/Unintended Acceleration

Hi Joe,

Here's what we have. Let me know if we can do anything else to help?

Nancy

Nancy Fein
Vice President
Toyota Customer Relations
(310) 468-5277
----- Forwarded by Nancy Fein/TMS/Toyota on 04/27/2009 10:35 AM -----

Renee Williams/Scion/Toyota
04/27/2009 10:29 AM
To Nancy Fein/TMS/Toyota@Toyota
cc "David Weigand" <David_Weigand@Toyota.com>, "Marion Sakima" <Marion_Sakima@Toyota.com>, "Rochelle

Harma" <Rochelle_Harma@toyota.com>, Michelle Drapeau/TMS/Toyota@Toyota
Subject Re: Fw: BuzzUpdate: Paul Knight/Houston Press Article and Toyota Prius/Unintended Acceleration

Good morning Nancy,

Here is the information Joe requested. Please let me know if any additional information is needed. Thank you!

Bobette Riner, Houston, TX -2009 Prius (Case #200902230354)-Customer states unintended acceleration. Customer pursuing arbitration.

Lupe Egusquiza, Tustin, CA -No contact found

Stacey Josefowicz, Anthem, AZ -No contact found

Herbert Kuehn, Battle Creek, MI -2005 Prius (Case #200511220589)-Customer states driving with cruise control, vehicle would not slow down. His request for repurchase was denied by the arbitrator on 12/21/2005.

Elizabeth or Ted James, Eagle, CO -2005 Prius (Case #200609051499)-Customer states vehicle began to accelerate without pressing on accelerator. Field Contact Report completed in 2006, FTS inspection found nothing wrong with vehicle.

Barbara Sherman, Winter Haven, FL -2006 Prius (Case #0904110296)-Customer was offered 1x goodwill offer of 1/3 of the repair for the multi-display unit as condition is not warrantable.

Richard Bacon, Tacoma, WA No contact found

Art Robinson, Tacoma, WA No contact found

Renee Williams
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Michelle Drapeau/TMS/Toyota
04/27/2009 08:50 AM
To "Renee Williams" <Renee_Williams@toyota.com>
cc "Marion Sakima" <Marion_Sakima@Toyota.com>, "David Weigand" <David_Weigand@Toyota.com>, "Rochelle Harma" <Rochelle_Harma@toyota.com>, "Nancy Fein" <Nancy_Fein@Toyota.com>
Subject Fw: BuzzUpdate: Paul Knight/Houston Press Article and Toyota Prius/Unintended Acceleration

Hi, as discussed, thanks Renee!!!

----- Original Message -----

From: Nancy Fein

Sent: 04/27/2009 07:41 AM PDT

To: David Weigand; Rochelle Harma; Michelle Drapeau

Subject: Fw: BuzzUpdate: Paul Knight/Houston Press Article and Toyota Prius/Unintended Acceleration

Could you please have someone check on the request below and let me know?

Nancy Fein

Vice President
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----- Forwarded by Nancy Fein/TMS/Toyota on 04/27/2009 07:40 AM -----

Joe Tetherow/TMS/Toyota
04/24/2009 03:44 PM

To "Nancy Fein" <nancy_fein@toyota.com>

cc mike michels@toyota.com, Brian Lyons/TMS/Toyota@Toyota, ron_kirkpatrick@toyota.com

Subject Fw: BuzzUpdate: Paul Knight/Houston Press Article and Toyota Prius/Unintended Acceleration

Nancy --

In case you're unaware, there was a very damning Prius story a few days ago in the Houston Press, an independent weekly. The print and online publication is affiliated with weeklies in 13 other major metro areas and the story is starting to appear in a number of them. Links to the story and an assessment of early consumer comments can be found below. The best site to view the long version of the story is denverwestword.com. Bryan Lyons in quality and safety PR is coordinating a response, which we will share with you just as soon as it's approved.

The story lists an number of Prius owners who claim to have experienced "sudden acceleration" or a loss of traction and engine shut-off on slippery surfaces.

I would like to know if CR can check the names in the story to see if they have contacted Toyota and what the outcome might have been. Unfortunately, we have no VIN numbers, phones, addresses or email for these people, just names and cities. Here they are:

Bobette Riner, Houston, TX
Lupe Egusquiza, Tustin, CA
Stacey Josefowicz, Anthem, AZ
Herbert Kuehn, Battle Creek, MI
Elizabeth or Ted James, Eagle, CO
Barbara Sherman, Winter Haven, FL
Richard Bacon, Tacoma, WA
Art Robinson, Tacoma, WA

I know it might be long shot, but any information you can provide could be useful if this story grows larger and generates media attention.

Thanks and let me know if you have any questions.

Joe

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----- Forwarded by Joe Tetherow/TMS/Toyota on 04/24/2009 03:07 PM -----

Ron Kirkpatrick/TMS/Toyota

04/24/2009 10:13 AM

To Joe Tetherow/TMS/Toyota@Toyota, Ming-Jou Chen/TMS/Toyota@Toyota

cc

Subject Fw: BuzzUpdate: Paul Knight/Houston Press Article and Toyota Prius/Unintended Acceleration

FYI--

----- Forwarded by Ron Kirkpatrick/TMS/Toyota on 04/24/2009 10:12 AM -----

"Colacurcio, Joe" <Joe.Colacurcio@nielsen.com>

04/24/2009 10:01 AM

To "Charley Roberts" <charley_roberts@toyota.com>, "Denise Morrissey" <denise_morrissey@toyota.com>, "Greg Brummer" <greg.brummer@gmail.com>, "Mike Goss" <mike.goss@tema.toyota.com>, "Mike Kroll" <michael_kroll@toyota.com>, "Mira Sleilati" <msleilati@tma.toyota.com>, "Ron Kirkpatrick" <ron_kirkpatrick@toyota.com>, "Sacha Terrill" <sacha_terrill@toyota.com>, "Scott DeYager" <scott_deyager@toyota.com>, "Sona Iliffe-Moon" <sona_iliffe-moon@toyota.com>

cc "Stephenson, Bill" <Bill.Stephenson@nielsen.com>, "Enzweiler, Julie" <Julie.Enzweiler@nielsen.com>, "Blackshaw, Pete" <Pete.Blackshaw@nielsen.com>, "Hammond, Joshua" <Joshua.Hammond@nielsen.com>
Subject BuzzUpdate: Paul Knight/Houston Press Article and Toyota Prius/Unintended Acceleration

Hello,

Please note that over the past 24 hours, there is slightly increased consumer commentary regarding the Paul Knight – Toyota Prius article published earlier this week in the alternative urban print publication, Houston Press. The article alleges instances of Prius unintended acceleration, or other Prius malfunctions.

Online consumers are mixed in reaction; though some do question the safety of the Prius and feel this warrants Toyota's investigation and addressing the situation, many others feel that the article is a flame piece or "call BS". Many on Priuschat.com are dismissive, calling the article "drivel", though some begin discussion of the heavy technology use in the Prius.

Currently, it appears that volume is minimal overall and this does not appear on influential venues such as Autoblog.com, Jalopnik.com, Consumerist.com, HuffingtonPost.com, etc. The 'Toyota Prius' Wikipedia page does not reflect this article at present, and Google search results simply on "Toyota Prius" do not show these results rising to the top.

At this time, consideration for an official statement to have in the wings is warranted in the event that any of the influential entities do "pick-up" the story. The response will need to be authentic and transparent, reiterate Toyota's commitment to its customers (especially safety), and be careful not to place any blame on the consumer. Based on the Houston Press article, it appears that Toyota had been contacted during the development of the story, and it may also be important to consider comments expressed on Toyota's behalf as they presently appear in the Houston Press article.

Representative Discussion Links and current comment volume:

<http://www.houstonpress.com/2009-04-23/news/wild-rides/> (8 comments)

<http://www.seattleweekly.com/2009-04-22/news/the-flip-side-of-the-perfect-prius/> (1 comment)

<http://www.riverfronttimes.com/2009-04-22/news/wild-rides-cars-accelerate-on-their-own-they-stop-dead-hybrid-prius-drivers-have-discovered-unexpected-adventure/#Comments> (3 comments)

<http://www.phoenixnewtimes.com/2009-04-23/news/hybrid-prius-drivers-may-be-in-for-an-unexpectedly-wild-ride#Comments> (1 comment)

<http://priuschat.com/forums/prius-hybrid-news/60807-houston-press-investigates-safety-record-toyota-prius.html> (37

posts)

<http://priuschat.com/forums/prius-hybrid-news/60807-houston-press-investigates-safety-record-toyota-prius.html> (38 posts)

<http://www.gminsidenews.com/forums/f66/about-prius-well-thats-one-heck-hybrid-78252/> (23 posts)

[http://www.houstonarchitecture.info/haif/index.php?](http://www.houstonarchitecture.info/haif/index.php?s=c1adc812720be14d0deb880404c5043a&showtopic=13605&st=180)

[s=c1adc812720be14d0deb880404c5043a&showtopic=13605&st=180](http://www.houstonarchitecture.info/haif/index.php?s=c1adc812720be14d0deb880404c5043a&showtopic=13605&st=180) (begins with post entry #200, about 5-10 current posts regarding Prius)

<http://autos.groups.yahoo.com/group/2009-Prius/message/18662> (several posts, not pervasive on Yahoo! Groups)

Online consumer comments:

"I just read the 8 page article about the runaway prius's, and feel that toyota needs to examine the car's electronic feedback and computer systems to find the problem bfr it kills sum1. I had an Opel yrs ago that had the carb. stick open on me at low speed. Opel gave me a new carb after the buick dlr found a defective part upon tearing the carb apart. If Toyota won't fix this, consumer report's needs to put a boot up the fed's NHTSA peoples arses & make toyota find and fix the problem b4 someone dies."

St.LouisNews.com, April 21, 2009

"I think it's funny that the RFT has been belittling the P-D for their numerous layoffs lately, and then has to import their headline scare-story from a "sister paper" in Houston. What's wrong guys, afraid to report on your own cutbacks? Or maybe the quality of in-house writing is so poor that even you are embarrassed to publish it. So when I read the RFT from now on, am I reading a St. Louis paper, or just an amalgam of fish wrappers from around the country?"

St.LouisNews.com, April 22, 2009

"Let me preface this by stating my biases... I love the Press, but I loathe Priuses(Prii?)

However, I think this article is more reminiscent of something Fox News would print in a campaign to drum up ratings.

I sympathize with the folks who wrecked their beloved cars. However, unintended acceleration is a well known phenomenon that has been studied by the NTSB and other government agencies for over 20 years. The fact is that the results of the impartial studies are invariably user error: the driver either hits the gas instead of the brake, or shifts into drive with their foot on the gas.

Prius drivers are generally not 'car people,' and this makes them more likely to do this because they really don't pay attention. Also, their well-documented smug nature makes them disinclined to admit fault under any circumstances. Don't blame the poor car. Look in the mirror, folks!"

HoustonPress, April 23, 2009

"I see both sides of the picture here, and I think Toyota needs to get up and give there loyal followers a good explanation. I have followed cars my whole life and I find Toyota basically calling everyone who bought there cars ignorant to be very offensive. The fact that some cars have had unexplained acceleration while most of them haven't is no reason to call it driver error. Has Toyota ever even offered a recall on moving parts before? (I know they have, I'm not stupid)

After reading this article, I was ready to get up and buy a Hummer. A minute later that feeling was gone, but none the less, I had lost all respect for Toyota. Has Toyota's dependability given them a complex that says, If something acts funny on the car, it must be something you have done. No, lets face it: even the best cars break down.

I think it should be everyone responsibility to do a little to protect the environment. Everyone who drives a Prius is in someway helping the environment. But lets remember, the person driving the Civic, the Yaris, the Cobalt, or the Rabbit is in one or another also trying to help the environment. Not everyone can afford a \$25000 compact car."

HoustonPress.com, April 23, 2009

"Look at me, I'm an attention whore..."

I wouldn't say all Prius owners are like this, but a few of those interviewed for the article seemed like this was truthfully the main reason they bought the vehicle. Sure, they may go on about how it is good for the environment, or better for their pocketbook, but the truth is it's just another status symbol. These people were led (by the media and pop culture, mainly) to purchase this vehicle, just like they were led to purchase Hummers: Not because they needed them, but because they could feel as if they were better than others around them.

You want to really "save the environment" and "lower your spending" while "reducing your carbon footprint"? Buy used. Perform your own maintenance. Keep the tire pressure up and be light on the pedal. Then drive that thing until it won't run any longer, then put a rebuilt engine in it and drive it some more. I currently own a 1994 4-banger Ranger 2WD that has close to 190,000 miles on it and still runs great. I have no car payment. Apply the mantra of "reduce, reuse, recycle, and repair" to everything in your life, and that will show real environmentalism. If you aren't doing a lot of your shopping at thrift stores, in my opinion you're doing it wrong.

Now, as far as the braking and acceleration issues being exhibited by the Prius that Toyota won't acknowledge;

these problems are indeed scary. I honestly don't know what the problem really is, but I suspect a "drive by wire" problem. I suspect that when you press on the gas or brake pedal, that there isn't an actual physical linkage between the pedal and the engine (or brakes), but rather the pressure instructs the onboard computer what to do, and it calculates whether to apply actual brakes, or whether to use regenerative braking, or a combo. With the gas pedal, it would be the same thing, with the computer determining whether and how to mix the power from the electric motor vs. the engine. It sounds like bad code, possibly what is known as a "race condition" causing a lockup in one or both systems (possibly at the same time). Whatever the cause, Toyota needs to fix it. Until it is fixed, Prius drivers are risking their lives and the lives of others just to be able to say "Look at Me!!!"
PhoenixNews.com, April 23, 2009

"One can do a similar article on any model of any car maker in USA.
"Unintended acceleration", "broken down on highway - scared the daylight out of me", etc.

I am a software engineers myself. Any software has bug. Intensive testing simply reduces the obvious ones (a matter of test coverage). No one can claim that the Prius software has 0 bug as it is now (millions lines of codes as I heard before). No one. Can you?

When it happens to you, you will see things differently.

I loved my old BMW and was a Bimmer fanatic until it started to fail me twice on highway.

I am trying to be objective here.

Floormats can be blamed in some of the cases, I am sure, but probably not all.

Some cases are obviously related to the TCS and lousy tires (those we knew already).

Don't brush this "unintended acceleration" off so quickly. If there is a bug some where, I surely hope it can be corrected and update the software on all Prius out there."

Priuschat.com, April 22, 2009

"Does anyone know any of the folks in this article that have reported safety concerns with their Prius? I would think that they would check out this site. Also if they are pursuing a legal case, their lawyer would probably advise them to not discuss it...especially on a forum.

But the majority on here may be correct that this article is just garbage...except several instances were cited. It seem to me...the writer implies that Prius owners are so fanatical about their vehicle that a safety concern could be suppressed...even by the "victim"."

Priuschat.com, April 23, 2009

FROM April 25, 2009 BuzzUpdate: Additional discussion threads note Autocoverup.com website or Lexus/Toyota unintended acceleration issues

There is a report in the Houston Press which alleges incidences of Toyota Prius unintended acceleration, there is reaction on Prius owner and enthusiast forum, Priuschat.com as well as some commentary on Yahoo! Autos Groups. The article itself intersperses Prius unintended acceleration events with various facts and figures or Prius history, and appears syndicated in fashion, observable in several other regional news sources. On Priuschat.com, many feel the article is sensational and lacking factual information, though some technical discussion ensues.

<http://www.houstonpress.com/2009-04-23/news/wild-rides/> (4 comments)

[http://priuschat.com/news/houston-press-investigates-safety-record-toyota-prius?](http://priuschat.com/news/houston-press-investigates-safety-record-toyota-prius?s=4cacd9b1b1f24f61c04bafb53f96914a)

[s=4cacd9b1b1f24f61c04bafb53f96914a](http://priuschat.com/news/houston-press-investigates-safety-record-toyota-prius?s=4cacd9b1b1f24f61c04bafb53f96914a) (29 Comments)

<http://priuschat.com/forums/prius-hybrid-news/60807-houston-press-investigates-safety-record-toyota-prius.html> (30 Comments)

<http://autos.groups.yahoo.com/group/2009-Prius/message/18662>

Other newspaper links, as noted by a Priuschatter (on Priuschat.com)

Miami News - The Toyota Prius: Hybrid Hell - page 1

Denver News - The Prius can take owners on a wild ride - page 1

Seattle News - The Flip Side of the Perfect Prius - page 1

St. Louis News - Wild Rides: Sometimes the cars accelerate on their own. Sometimes they stop dead. Drivers of the hybrid Prius have discovered they can be an unexpected adventure. - page 1

Broward/Palm Beach News - Drivers of the Toyota Prius Have Discovered They Can Be In for an Unexpected Adventure - page 4

Regards -

Joe Colacurcio

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From: Ron_Kirkpatrick@Toyota.com [mailto:Ron_Kirkpatrick@Toyota.com]
Sent: Friday, April 24, 2009 12:13 PM
To: Colacurcio, Joe
Cc: Charley_Roberts@Toyota.com; Scott_DeYager@Toyota.com; Sacha_Terrill@toyota.com
Subject: Fw: PAUL KNIGHT & PRIUS

Joe--

Can you guys take a look at this and give us your take and what you recommend we do, if anything. This is a horrible review of the new Prius that started out in Houston but has spread to other major city alternative papers. Call me if you have any questions. Thanks. -R

----- Forwarded by Ron Kirkpatrick/TMS/Toyota on 04/24/2009 08:36 AM -----

Joe Tetherow/TMS/Toyota
04/24/2009 08:40 AM

To ron_kirkpatrick@toyota.com
cc
Subject Fw: PAUL KNIGHT & PRIUS

As requested.....

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----- Forwarded by Joe Tetherow/TMS/Toyota on 04/24/2009 08:37 AM -----

Joe Tetherow/TMS/Toyota
04/23/2009 03:36 PM

To Mike Michels
cc john_hanson@toyota.com, Brian Lyons/TMS/Toyota@Toyota, Ming-Jou Chen/TMS/Toyota@Toyota, "Bill Kwong"
<bill_kwong@toyota.com>
Subject PAUL KNIGHT & PRIUS

Paul Knight is listed as a staff writer for the Houston Press, which appears to be one in a chain of large-city alternative weeklies. In addition to the Houston Press, his Prius article has also appeared in:

Denver Westword
Phoenix News
Broward/Palm Beach News
Miami News
Seattle Weekly
St. Louis News
Nashville News

Other papers in the chain that could run the story include:

Kansas City News
Orange County News
San Francisco News
Los Angeles News
Minneapolis News
New York News

The website for each paper has a blog section, which will enable us to monitor reader reaction as we prepare a response.

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