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Department of Transportation Addresses Toyota Safety Issues

DOT 22-10

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WASHINGTON, D.C. - The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) today announced that it is opening a formal investigation of the Toyota Prius Hybrid model year 2010 to look into allegations of momentary loss of braking capability while traveling over an uneven road surface, pothole or bump.

The Office of Defects Investigation has received 124 reports from consumers, including four reports alleging that crashes occurred. Investigators have spoken with consumers and conducted pre-investigatory field work.

"Safety is our top priority," said Secretary Ray LaHood. "That is why in recent weeks NHTSA has also issued a consumer advisory on the recall of several models of Toyota vehicles and the Pontiac Vibe involving pedal entrapment and sticky accelerator pedals. We will continue to monitor these issues closely."

Late Wednesday, Secretary LaHood spoke with Toyota president, Akio Toyoda, who reassured him that Toyota takes U.S. safety concerns seriously and puts safety at the top of the company's priorities.

Consumer complaints about possible safety problems are one of NHTSA's most important sources of information about vehicles. Officials review each one within a single business day and analyze the information to ensure trends are detected early.

Of the 100 investigations NHTSA opens every year, there are currently 40 open defect investigations, three of which involve Toyota. NHTSA has the most active defect investigation program in the world, opening or closing an investigation almost every week. Over the last three years, NHTSA's defect and compliance investigations have resulted in 524 recalls involving 23.5 million vehicles.

NHTSA is advising owners of vehicles affected by recent Toyota recalls to contact their local dealership if they detect a problem. For more information, consumers should visit www.nhtsa.gov or call the NHTSA Vehicle Safety Hotline at (888) 327-4236.

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