

## U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood Announces Major Investigations to Resolve Issue of Sudden Acceleration

U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood today announced two major investigations designed to answer questions surrounding the issue of unintended vehicle acceleration.

The prestigious National Academy of Sciences – an independent body using top scientific experts - will examine the broad subject of unintended acceleration and electronic vehicle controls across the entire automotive industry. Separately, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, which is the Department of Transportation's auto safety agency, has enlisted NASA engineers with expertise in areas such as computer controlled electronic systems, electromagnetic interference and software integrity to help tackle the issue of unintended vehicle acceleration in Toyotas.

"We are determined to get to the bottom of unintended acceleration," said Secretary LaHood. "For the safety of the American driving public, we must do everything possible to understand what is happening. And that is why we are tapping the best minds around."

Secretary LaHood has also asked the U.S. Department of Transportation Inspector General (IG) to review whether NHTSA's Office of Defect Investigation (ODI) has the necessary resources and systems to identify and address safety defects as it moves forward.

The National Academy of Sciences' National Research Council will examine the broad subject of unintended acceleration and electronic vehicle controls across the entire industry over the course of 15 months. This will not be limited to Toyota, but will cover all manufacturers. A panel of experts will review industry and government efforts to identify possible sources of unintended acceleration, including electronic vehicle controls, human error, mechanical failure and interference with accelerator systems.

The experts will look at software, computer hardware design, electromagnetic compatibility and electromagnetic interference. The panel will make recommendations to NHTSA on how its rulemaking, research and defect investigation activities may help ensure the safety of electronic control systems in motor vehicles.

The NHTSA review of the electronic throttle control systems in Toyotas is to be completed by late summer. NHTSA has brought in NASA engineers and other experts in subjects such as electromagnetic compatibility as part of a shorter-term review of the systems used in Toyota vehicles to determine whether they contain any possible flaws that would warrant a defect investigation. NASA's expertise in electronics, hardware, software, hazard analysis and complex problem solving ensures this review will be comprehensive. Currently there are nine experts from NASA assisting NHTSA, and additional personnel will join the team if needed.

Both studies – from the National Academy of Sciences and from NHTSA – will be peer reviewed by scientific experts. The total cost of the two studies is expected to come to approximately \$3 million, including the cost of purchasing cars that have allegedly experienced unintended acceleration to be studied.

Finally, Secretary LaHood asked the U.S. Department of Transportation Inspector General to assess whether the NHTSA Office of Defects Investigation conducted an adequate review of complaints of alleged unintended acceleration reported to NHTSA from 2002 to the present. The IG will also determine whether ODI had the appropriate number of personnel and staff expertise to assess and address the technical issues raised by the complaints and whether the data was sufficient to identify specific defects that caused unintended acceleration. That information will help DOT officials determine whether more resources are necessary for pursuing defect investigations.

"We are bringing the best minds and talents to resolve this issue," said NHTSA Administrator David Strickland. "We will not rest until we have identified and addressed any potential vehicle-related causes of unintended acceleration."

**A Message from Ray LaHood** - Every single time someone takes their eyes or their focus off the road – even for just a few seconds – they put their lives and the lives of others in danger. [Distraction driving](#) is unsafe, irresponsible and in a split second, its consequences can be devastating.

