Toyota Turns Down Award For Prius, Cites Recalls

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TOKYO (AP) — Toyota has declined to accept a Japanese government energy efficiency award given to its hybrid Prius, saying Wednesday the honor is not appropriate for a car hit by massive recalls.

The Prius was one of the three products that won the annual trade minister's grand prize for energy efficiency and ecological quality, said Hiroshi Tsuchiya, an official with the government's energy agency.

Toyota announced Tuesday it would recall about 437,000 Prius and other hybrid vehicles to fix brake problems. There have been about 200 complaints in Japan and the U.S. about a delay when the brakes in the Prius were pressed in cold conditions and on bumpy roads.

"We declined to accept the award, because we thought it is not appropriate," said Toyota spokesman Paul Nolasco, citing the global recall of the gas-electric hybrid.

Toyota Motor Corp. notified the government Monday of its decision to decline the award.

The Prius recalls brought the total number of vehicles recalled by Toyota since late last year to about 8.5 million, including for floor mats that can trap gas pedals and faulty gas pedals that are slow to return to the idle position.

Award winners were announced in late January ahead of Wednesday's presentation ceremony. The two other trade minister award winners were Mitsubishi Electric Corp. for an air conditioner and Fuji Xerox Co. for a multifunction copy machine.

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