Toyota Recalls 1.29M Vehicles For Air Bags, Wipers

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TOKYO (AP) — Toyota is recalling 907,000 vehicles, mostly Corolla models, around the world for faulty air bags and another 385,000 Lexus IS luxury cars for defective wipers.

Toyota Motor Corp. spokesman Naoto Fuse said Wednesday that two crashes were reported in the U.S. related to the air bag problem, but Toyota had not been able to confirm them. Fuse said it was unclear whether anyone had been injured in the two crashes. Toyota has confirmed 18 cases in the U.S. of abrasion-type injuries from the air bag problem, he said.

Initially, the Japanese automaker had said there were no accidents related to either problem. In total, it received 46 reports of problems involving the air bags from North America, and one from Japan, and 25 reports of problems related to the windshield wipers.

Some 752,000 Corolla and Corolla Matrix cars in the U.S. and thousands of similar vehicles in Japan, Mexico and Canada that were manufactured between December 2001 and May 2004 are being recalled for air bags that can improperly inflate. Some 141,000 vehicles in Canada are part of that recall, according to Toyota.

The air bags inadvertently inflate when the vehicle's electronic signals damage a chip in the part that controls the air bags, Fuse said. Under the recall, the part will be corrected to be able to block such signals, he said.

The problem wipers, which can get stuck if there is heavy snowfall, affect three kinds of Lexus IS models, manufactured from May 2005 to October 2011, including 270,000 vehicles in the U.S. and nearly 17,000 vehicles in Canada. The recall also affects the Lexus IS sold in Europe, the Middle East and China, Toyota said.

Toyota's reputation for top quality was undermined in the past few years by massive recalls for a spate of problems, including bad brakes, gas pedals and floor mats, mostly in the U.S.

Executives have repeatedly promised to beef up quality controls and be quicker with recalls to repair Toyota's image.

Toyota's production was hit by the quake and tsunami in northeastern Japan in 2011, where key suppliers were located, but it has since recovered, seeing sales grow not only in the U.S. but also in Asia.

Earlier this week, Toyota released its tally for global vehicle sales last year at a

record 9.748 million vehicles, regaining its spot as the world's No. 1 automaker from U.S. rival General Motors Co.

Toyota has announced some recalls in recent months, but they have been relatively minor, such as floor mats, and generally affect vehicles manufactured before its latest efforts to regain sterling quality.

Last month, Toyota agreed to pay more than $1 billion in the U.S. to settle lawsuits where vehicle owners said the value of their cars and SUVs plummeted after the company recalled millions of vehicles because of sudden-acceleration issues.

Executives say they are not admitting fault. But they acknowledge the company is eager to put the recall crisis behind it, and move ahead with sales growth in Asian nations as well as the U.S.

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