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## Toyota's sticky pedal fixes start Friday

TONY VAN ALPHEN  
BUSINESS REPORTER

Toyota Canada says it will start modifying the accelerator pedal on 270,000 vehicles here as early as Friday by inserting a "Chiclet-sized" steel bar to eliminate any sticking that could cause crashes.

A top Toyota official said Monday dealers have the ability to complete the installation of the tiny precision-cut part on 2005-2010 model year vehicles within the next month as it grapples with the biggest crisis in the company's history.

"The level of service that customers receive will be quite impressive," said Stephen Beatty, Toyota's managing director. "Our target is to have (the part) in the dealers so they can begin servicing Friday.

"The part is small. It's about the size of a Chiclet. It has to fit inside the pedal system."

Beatty said it's critical that consumers realize Toyota is doing everything possible to retain their confidence, and that process starts with its 243 dealers. Toyota is also blitzing the media in hopes of dampening the hit on a stellar reputation for quality and durability built up over the past two decades.

"We regret any loss of peace of mind that this recall may have caused," the company says in full-page ads running in major daily newspapers. "But a recall was necessary because we place the safety of you, our customers, above everything else."

The recall and the lack of a fix or clear advice in recent weeks had left consumers fuming and wondering whether it was safe to drive Toyota models that include the Corolla compact, the second-most popular car in Canada.

Critics have charged that parent Toyota Motor Corp. has known about the sticking accelerator problem for years and resisted recalls in the U.S.

Toyota is already facing class-action lawsuits in Canada and the U.S. seeking compensation for consumers who claim the company "knew or ought to have known" of design defects that resulted in accidents and injuries.

Toyota has revealed it is aware of five incidents of sticking pedals in Canada since October, but none led to accidents or injuries. It said it has worked at "lightning speed" to find a permanent solution.

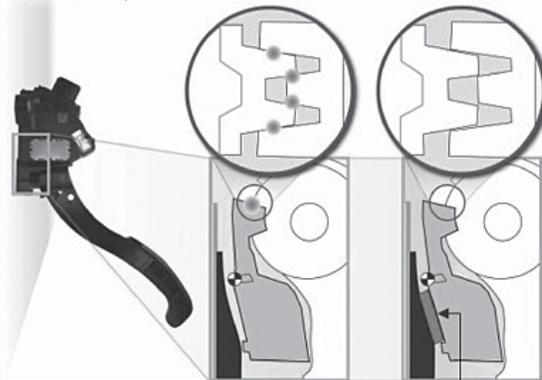
Beatty said Toyota also plans to resume selling the eight models under recall by the weekend, after an unprecedented 10-day halt so it could find a solution and

### Pedal assembly

How Toyota plans to fix accelerator pedals.

**Current pedal**  
Occurrences of excessive friction on contact points

**Modified pedal**  
Stainless steel reinforcement bar reduces surface tension and friction



SOURCE: Toyota Canada

Precision cut stainless steel reinforcement bar inserted  
SUPPLIED IMAGE

Toyota says its accelerator fix will reduce the surface tension between the "friction shoe" and adjoining surface.

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### REPAIR PROCESS

Toyota has started sending letters to the owners of 270,000 vehicles in the model years 2005-2010 that tell them to bring in their car or truck for a modification to avoid any chance of sticking accelerator pedals.

After receiving letters, drivers who have expressed concerns to dealers about sticking pedals, and owners of older models, will have the opportunity to receive the modification first.

Drivers must schedule an appointment with their dealer.

In this staggered process, dealers will start installing precision-cut

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make changes on dealer lots and in the delivery chain.

Toyota announced last week that it would temporarily stop producing and selling the models.

In Canada, the company idled production in Cambridge and Woodstock for one week of its three most popular vehicles, the Corolla, the Matrix crossover and the RAV4 sport ute.

Those vehicles, and five others in the recall, represent more than 55 per cent of Toyota's annual sales in Canada.

The company plans to resume production of those models in Canada and the U.S. with redesigned accelerator pedals systems from the original supplier, CTS Corp. in Mississauga.

The suspension of sales and production followed the recall of vehicles in Canada and the U.S. on Jan. 21 – and later in Europe and Asia – because of rare incidents of sticking pedals that could cause unwanted acceleration and crashes.

The recall involved 2.3 million vehicles in the U.S. and several million more elsewhere.

Toyota would not estimate the cost of installing the bar in existing vehicles, but industry watchers say the automaker will likely lose some business as consumers question the safety of the company's models.

"We haven't been focusing on the costs," Beatty said. "We have been focusing on finding a solution and getting it into the marketplace."

In its probe, engineers for Toyota and Indiana-based CTS Corp. concentrated on a lever and spring in the pedal system that help control the force necessary to depress the pedal.

They found that over time, the use of plastic materials, wear and condensation increased the possibility of sticking on surfaces.

"In rare instances, the friction of the accelerator pedal may increase to a point where the accelerator pedal may become harder to depress, slower to return or, in the worst case, become stuck in a partially depressed position," the company said.

The problem is similar to a piece of paper that will slide freely over a desk until someone adds a drop or two of water to the desk surface. Then the paper becomes stuck, according to the company.

Toyota said the bar will reduce the surface tension between the "friction shoe" and adjoining surface.

"The (part) adjusts the angle on the friction lever and adjusts the amount of tension inside the assembly," Beatty said.

#### TORONTO STAR

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steel bars in accelerator pedal systems as early as Friday.

Technicians will make the modification in less than an hour, at no cost to the vehicle's owner.

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