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# Don't drive recalled Toyotas: U.S. Transportation Secretary

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U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood told a congressional hearing Wednesday people should stop driving any Toyota vehicles involved in a massive recall.

"My advice is, if anybody owns one of these vehicles, stop driving it, take it to the Toyota dealer because they believe they have the fix for it," said LaHood.

"We need to fix the problem so people don't have to worry about disengaging the engine or slamming the brakes on or put it in neutral."

Shares in the Japanese automaker fell more than seven per cent to \$72.62 U.S. on the New York Stock Exchange on news of the secretary's comments.

The automaker has recalled some 2.5 million vehicles in the U.S. and Canada over concerns about sticky accelerators.

LaHood said he also wants to talk with Toyota about the response by the automaker to consumer complaints.

"We're not finished with Toyota," LaHood said in an email to Reuters.

"What I said in there was obviously a misstatement," LaHood told reporters after the hearing. "If you own one of these cars, take it to the dealer. If you are in doubt, take it to the dealer and have them fix it."

A Toyota Canada spokeswoman agreed that anyone with concerns should take their cars to a dealership.

"They should absolutely have full confidence in the vehicles that are part of the sticky pedal recall," said Sandy Di Felice, Toyota Canada spokeswoman. "Anybody that has any concerns should go to the dealer and the dealer will look at the pedals."

Toyota was to begin shipping repair kits for the faulty pedals to dealers in Canada on Wednesday, with modification set to begin Thursday, Di Felice said.

In other news, U.S. safety officials are reviewing electronic throttle systems as a possible cause of sudden acceleration by Toyota cars and the examination may be extended to cars made by other major manufacturers.

Several lawsuits filed against Toyota claim electromagnetic interference from power lines could affect the computerized systems that control modern vehicle movements, Bloomberg News quoted LaHood as saying Wednesday.

Toyota has already ruled out electronics as a cause of sudden acceleration by its cars. Millions of Toyota cars have been recalled internationally because of sticky gas pedals.

The U.S. Government is also considering civil penalties against Toyota, the world's largest automaker, for its handling of the recall crisis. Suggestions have been made that Toyota may not be doing all it can to resolve the accelerator pedal problems.

Toyota began shipping steel plates to U.S. dealers Monday as a fix for the sticky gas pedals. Recalls have reached 2.57 million vehicles in the U.S. and Canada alone.

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