

However, the latest and most important reason for not driving on a flat tire is the damage that can be caused to the electronic sensors inside the wheels. Sensors inside the wheels? Yes, you read correctly.

Many late model cars, especially 2005 and newer models, are equipped with Low Tire Pressure Warning Systems. A critical part of this system is a small transmitter mounted on the inside of each wheel in the area that is normally filled by air. When a tire goes flat, there is no longer a cushion of air to protect the sensor, so driving on the flat tire now allows the full weight of the car to crush that wheels pressure sensor. Some of these pressure sensors can cost upwards of 180.00.

Obviously, if you discover you have a flat tire, and you find yourself in a dangerous spot, like in the high speed lane of a highway, better to risk damaging the sensor and move over to the break down lane. We can replace your sensor but we can't replace you! Otherwise, try to avoid driving on a flat if at all possible.

In Passing

Obituaries Courtesy The Standard Times

Note: Due to recent requests, we will be adding family survivors to our customer's obituaries as space allows.

Louis J. Daprato, Jr., 74, of New Bedford, passed away on Tuesday, November 24, 2009, at Caritas Norwood Hospital, after a long illness. He was the husband of Eileen C. (Medeiros) Daprato, married 48 years; and son of the late Louis and Sheila Veronica (King) Daprato. He was born in Acushnet and lived most of his life in New Bedford. He was an Army veteran and served in the Korean War and held the rank of Sgt. First Class. He was formerly employed at States Nitewear as a Manager until his retirement. In his leisure time he enjoyed gardening and was considered by all who knew him as a "workaholic." Survivors include his wife; four children, Peter Daprato and his companion, Nancy Monteiro of New Bedford, Lou-Ann Smith and her husband, Gary of CT, Richard Daprato of Acushnet and Jason Daprato of ME; a grandson, Jared Daprato; a brother, Norman Daprato of FL; five sisters, Barbara Healy of CA, Pat Hickney of CA, Martha Pigeon of TX, Priscilla Correia of NY and Sheila Souza of Sandwich; and several nieces and nephews.

Joseph Sousa, age 83, of Dartmouth, MA passed on Friday, December 4, 2009 at Brandon Woods in Dartmouth. He was the husband of Dolores (Vogado) Sousa. They were married for 57 years. Born in Central Falls, RI, the son of the late Jose and Maria P. (Jorge) de Sousa. He served his country in the United States Navy Air Force during World War II. Following his service he attended and graduated from the Swain School of Design in New Bedford. He was employed in the printing trade as a commercial artist until his retirement. He also taught art to students of all ages in his private studio loft. Mr. Sousa was an active and respected member of the Clube Madeirense SS Sacramento, Inc, sponsors of the Feast of the Blessed Sacrament. His service to the club spanned more than 50 years with many of

those years on the Club's Board of Directors. He was instrumental in the establishment of the Club's scholarship foundation. Most notably, he was the driving force in creating the Museum of Madeiran Heritage and was tireless in his dedication and promotion of Madeiran culture and history. He received numerous honors for his many outstanding accomplishments.

Mr. Sousa was featured in many articles and publications over the years including Portuguese Spinner-An American Story. He was a charter member of the Dartmouth School Music Association and instrumental in the founding of the Joseph DeMello Elementary School Scholarship. Art work, genealogy, the Island of Madeira, gardening, and caring for his farm animals were just a few of his passions. Surviving in addition to his wife are their six children, Joseph V. Sousa and his wife Mary Anne of Dartmouth, David V. Sousa and his wife Jan of Hebron, CT., John V. Sousa and his wife Conee of Dartmouth, Mary-Carol Cate and her husband John of Dartmouth, Rosemary Gill and her husband Michael of Dartmouth, June Barboza of Dartmouth; one sister Laura de Sousa of Maine; fourteen grandchildren, Joseph, Paul and his wife Pam Carey, Christine, Cathleen, Jessica, Mark, Lindsey and Jay Sousa, Matthew and Christopher Cate, Thomas and Sarah Gill, Nicole and Carly Barboza, two great-grandchildren Audrey and Amy Sousa, brother and sister-in-law Nelson and Pauline Riding and their son David, sister-in-law Irene Sousa, and many nieces and nephews. Mr. Sousa was also the brother of the late David and John Sousa.

Edmund J. Rovas, 85, of North Dartmouth, died Thursday, December 31, 2009, at Our Lady's Haven. He was the husband of Helen M. (Bonalewicz) Rovas. Born in Dartmouth, son of the late Joseph D. and Karolina (Gnat) Rovas, and the late Karolina (Mroz) Rovas, he was a lifelong resident of the town. He was employed as an electrician with IBEW, Local 223, until his retirement. Mr. Rovas was a WWII Army veteran of the 15th Regiment, 3rd Infantry Division, having attained the rank of Sergeant. He served in North Africa, Anzio, and Southern France. He was the recipient of the Combat Infantryman's Badge, the Bronze Star and the Purple Heart with 2 Oak Leaf Clusters. Mr. Rovas was a member of the VFW, DAV, and No-quochoke Masonic Lodge. He was a ham radio operator, SE-MARA and enjoyed dancing and Polish music. Survivors include his wife; a daughter, Deborah Clermont of Fall River; a son, William J. Rovas and his wife, Sandra of MI; 2 grandchildren, Matthew J. Rovas of MI, and Christopher Krupa and his wife, Dina of NY.

We appreciate your business. Please drive safely.

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Odds & Ends

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- Feel free to let us know what you think. Give us a call or send us an e-mail at: samgauto@samscars.com

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Toyota Announces Major Recall

*Source:
Toyota.com*

Toyota Motor Sales (TMS), U.S.A., Inc, has announced that they will recall approximately 2.3 million vehicles to correct sticking accelerator pedals on specific Toyota Division models. This action is separate from the on-going recall of approximately 4.2 million Toyota and Lexus vehicles to reduce the risk of pedal entrapment by incorrect or out of place accessory floor mats. Approximately 1.7 million Toyota Division vehicles are subject to both separate recall actions.

“In recent months, Toyota has investigated isolated reports of sticking accelerator pedal mechanisms in certain vehicles without the presence of floor mats,” said TMS Group Vice President Irv Miller. “Our investigation indicates that there is a possibility that certain accelerator pedal mechanisms may, in rare instances, mechanically stick in a partially depressed position or return slowly to the idle position. Consistent with our commitment to the safety of our cars and our customers, we have initiated this voluntary recall action.”

Toyota's accelerator pedal recall is confined to the following Toyota Division vehicles:

**Certain 2009-2010 RAV4,
Certain 2009-2010 Corolla,
2009-2010 Matrix,
2005-2010 Avalon,
Certain 2007-2010 Camry,
Certain 2010 Highlander,
2007-2010 Tundra,
2008-2010 Sequoia**

No Lexus Division or Scion vehicles are affected by this recall action. Also not affected are Toyota Prius, Tacoma, Sienna, Venza, Solara, Yaris, 4Runner, FJ Cruiser, Land Cruiser and select Camry models, including all Camry hybrids.

The condition is rare, but can occur when the pedal mechanism becomes worn and, in certain conditions, the accelerator pedal may become harder to depress, slower to return or, in the worst case, stuck in a partially depressed position. Toyota is working quickly to prepare the correction remedy.

In the event that a driver experiences an accelerator pedal that sticks in a partial open throttle position or returns slowly to idle position, the vehicle can be controlled with firm and steady application of the brakes. The brakes should not be pumped repeatedly because it could deplete vacuum assist, requiring stronger brake pedal pressure. The vehicle should be driven to the

nearest safe location, the engine shut off and a Toyota dealer contacted for assistance.

Toyota will continue to investigate incidents of unwanted acceleration and take appropriate measures to address any trends that are identified. Toyota owners who have questions or concerns should contact the Toyota Customer Experience Center at 1-800-331-4331.

The Pitfalls of Flat Rate

By: Glenn Giammalvo

Many automotive shops, and all new car dealers, use a pay system of "flat rate" in which the technician is paid for a fixed amount of time to perform a specific repair or diagnosis. This helps those shops control costs because any lost time or 'time overage' is not paid out to the technician and it also makes estimate making easier and accurate. A flat rate guidebook is used to determine what the 'normal' labor time should be to effect a specific repair.

If the flat rate guidebook says it will take 2 hours to replace your water pump the cost of the repair is easy to estimate. In addition, if the repair should take longer, the mechanic is the one who gets burned, and not reimbursed for his time. Unfortunately this system does not reward the technician for being thorough and does not always allow the time needed to do the job right.

(Note: We had a GM training instructor who had a favorite quote while teaching his classes: *"There's never time to do it right, but theirs always time to do it over."*)

Case in point, recently we looked at a young mom's mini-van that had some noise and ride issues. Another shop had recently advised her that her van needed all sorts of front-end work and gave her a fairly large repair estimate. Now our technician, not handicapped by being held to flat rate times, (we don't pay by flat-rate), drove the van and gave it a thorough inspection. Nothing in the front end of the van seemed to be a cause for concern but our technician found that the rear end of the van told another story. The straight rear axle beam that supports both rear wheels was cracked 3/4 way around. When driving over bumps, this crack would open and close, letting the rear wheels steer and change the direction of the vehicle. Not a safe condition at all, and not one that would be helped with any amount of front-end work.

Auto Body Shops Win Verdict Against Hartford Insurance Co.

*Source:
Hammer & Dolly Magazine*

As Hammer & Dolly went to press, the Auto Body Association of Connecticut's campaign for a fair Labor Rate and an equitable playing field between DRP shops and independent repair facilities resulted in a \$15 million judgment against the Hartford in a Stamford, Ct. courtroom. The association and three Connecticut-based body shops (Artie's Auto Body, Inc., A & R Body Specialty and Skrip's Auto Body) had filed a lawsuit against the insurer (Artie's Auto Body v. Hartford Insurance Co.) for engaging in what the plaintiffs claimed was "unjust enrichment" in the insurer's promotion of its DRP program to policyholders.

Originally launched in August 2003, the lawsuit claimed that The Hartford *"prevailed upon its own and independent appraisers to establish an artificially low standard of hourly Labor Rates for auto body repair work in Connecticut."* According to a November 18 story on Collision Week, the shops' attorney, David Slossberg, has announced that his clients will seek punitive damages over and above the \$15 million jury award.

Electronic Throttle Controls

By: Mark Giammalvo

As of this writing, Toyota has just announced that it will replace a part on the accelerator pedals of the vehicles affected by their recent, sudden acceleration recall. Although they state that the cause is a mechanical part, I can't help but wonder if any of this was ever related to the vehicle's electronic throttle controls.

Several years back I can remember having a hood open on a late model Volvo that a customer had brought in for service. I can remember looking at the throttle body on the engine and finding that it looked 'bare' like something was missing. As I looked further, I noticed that it was missing the traditional 'accelerator pedal cable' that I had been so used to seeing over the years.

For nearly a century, automobiles have had a mechanical cable connection from the accelerator pedal inside the car to the throttle blade on the engine. In very simple terms, when you push on the accelerator pedal, this pushes on a cable, that opens a throttle plate, which in turn lets air in the engine. This increase in air, brings an increase in fuel, which results in an increase in engine speed.

So, now your probably wondering, as I was, if there still is an accelerator pedal, and a throttle, how are the two connected without a cable? The answer - electronics, may be easier to read than to comprehend.

Due to both, increased processor speeds, as well as a decrease in production costs, more and more mechanical systems are being re-designed and made to function with electronic controls.

Late model Toyota's, as well as other manufacturers, now utilize a sensor mounted to the accelerator pedal, inside the car. This sensor is often called a Throttle Pedal Position Sensor or TPPS.

This sensor is normally connected to the engine computer, Powertrain Control Module, (PCM), via a 6-wire connection. The TPPS is in constant communication with the PCM. When the accelerator pedal is 'at rest,' with no pressure applied, the TPPS sends a voltage reading to the PCM. An 'at rest' voltage reading typically may be 0.8 volts. As the accelerator pedal is pushed down, the voltage reading from the TPPS to the PCM will increase to a maximum of 4.5 volts. The PCM then interprets this increased voltage reading as a request for faster engine speed. The PCM, in turn, then commands a small motor, (Throttle Actuator), on the engine to push open the throttle blade, thus resulting in an increase in air and fuel causing the engine to speed up.

As a safety feature, the TPPS has two sensors inside, each one reporting a slightly different voltage as its counterpart. If the difference in the two readings does not match, the PCM detects this mismatch and immediately switches to 'failsafe mode'. In fail safe mode, power is cut to the Throttle Actuator and the throttle blade returns to the idle position, letting in just enough air for the engine to idle. When the PCM is in this fail safe mode, the vehicle can be driven very slowly by pressing down on the gas pedal. Although the Throttle Actuator will no longer be commanded to move, the PCM will be able to respond by increasing engine speed, albeit slightly, by altering fuel injector spray and engine timing. In this mode, the driver can still use the vehicle at low speeds to drive to a repair facility or to safely get back home.

In the case of the Toyota recall, it does not appear at this time that this specific failure was due to an electronic part. Regardless, it is important to remember that all electronics can be affected by many different things, from drastic temperature changes to excessive vibrations and even radio frequency transmissions emitted by cell phones and other devices.

As always, if you have any questions about the proper operation of your vehicle, or the status of any recalls or warranties, please don't hesitate to give us a call.

Don't Drive On Flat Tires

Although that above headline may sound like a 'no-brainer' its more important than ever to 'park it' when you have discovered that you have a flat tire.

In the past, many of us have driven, just 'a little further,' on a flat tire to try to get to a repair shop or gas station. Today, that little trip on a flat tire can result in a very costly repair.

Driving on a flat tire normally damages the tire beyond repair as the wheel rips into the sidewall of the tire. Some flat tires can be repaired by a plug or patch, depending on the size and location of the leak point. In addition, driving on a flat tire can also damage the wheel, some of which today can cost upwards of 800.00 each.