

Our Point of View: Putting More Boots on the Ground

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by Kristen Tabar

Today Toyota made a major announcement that it is [expanding its Product Quality Field Offices](#) to four additional U.S. sales regions over the next year, with the newest center set to open in San Francisco this month. Meanwhile, Toyota Canada Inc. announced that it will establish offices in Toronto and Calgary, bringing the total number of North American Product Quality Field Offices to seven.

This program, which launched in late 2009 with a pilot office for the New York region, puts more technical and engineering specialist “boots on the ground” to enhance our field technical presence and data gathering and reporting capabilities.

Each Field Office will have a mandate to investigate specific issues related to the regional, geographic or environmental conditions in each area. For example, the New York investigates the vehicle performance in cold weather states, with an emphasis on corrosion issues. The San Francisco office will focus on hybrid vehicle systems and durability. Future offices are planned for Jacksonville, Fla., focusing on heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) and drivability; Houston, Texas, concentrating on truck and chassis components; and Denver, Colo., studying high altitude performance and SUV models. Our Canadian offices will concentrate on extreme seasonal temperature changes, high road salt usage and unique vehicle operating conditions.

This initiative is one way Toyota is strengthening its regional decision-making capabilities in the United States, which was explained to us this morning by Dino Triantafyllos, our new Regional Product Safety Executive. In this role, Dino has direct oversight for new initiatives to gather and analyze the customer data collected by our Product Quality groups and SMART teams, and to strengthen our relationship and communications with outside entities such as NHTSA, NASA, and the National Academy of Sciences. Using this information, Dino can make direct recommendations to Toyota’s headquarters in Japan about North American recall and safety issues.

By strengthening our ability to listen to our customers and react quickly to meet their expectations, steps like these are an important part of moving President Akio Toyoda’s six-point quality action plan forward.

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