

Our Point of View: Recall Is Not a Four-Letter Word

August 10, 2010

by Steve St. Angelo

What's in a word? When it comes to the word "recall," the answer can be a lot, given the media scrutiny that has surrounded Toyota in recent months. It's important to keep in mind, however, that recalls are an integral part of our commitment to standing by our products and being responsive to our customers. Put another way, "recall" is not a four-letter word.

As Toyota's Chief Quality Officer for North America, my job is to make sure we act quickly and decisively whenever we identify a quality issue, and I have a direct line on quality to our global president, Akio Toyoda.

Over the long-term, Toyota has built a record of safety, reliability and quality that's unquestionably strong – and we've made significant changes at Toyota in the past several months to make sure we are an even more responsive, safety-focused organization. We're listening closely to our customers and taking quick, decisive actions to ensure their vehicles are safe. Our strengthened quality assurance team is leaving no stone unturned as it thoroughly examines our entire fleet, including millions of cars and trucks that have performed reliably for more than a decade.

We've put more resources into the field – such as rapid response [SMART teams](#) to make on-site inspections – so we can better gather, analyze and respond to customer feedback. And, throughout our operations, we're re-emphasizing the basics of the [Toyota Production System](#), which involve pulling what's known as an andon cord to stop the production line whenever you see a problem. We aren't perfect – everyone makes mistakes – but the important thing is to stop the line and fix it.

That's what we're doing with our recalls. If we determine that there's even the slightest safety concern with our cars on the road, we're not hesitating to address it – sometimes on the basis of just a handful of complaints.

Other automakers are also moving more quickly. While there were 492 recalls across the industry in the U.S. during 2009, more than 300 recall campaigns were announced in the first six months of this year. According to a [Detroit News report](#), our industry is on track this year to recall more than 20 million vehicles, the most since 2004.

We're also proud of the way our dealers have gone above and beyond in servicing vehicles covered by the three major recalls we announced in late 2009 and early 2010. To date, they've completed more than four million remedies, including almost 80 percent of the fixes for possible sticking pedals. That's a remarkable achievement in a relatively short period.

Obviously, recalls should never be considered business as usual. But there's another, more common meaning of the word "recall": and that's "to remember." At Toyota, we never want to forget that our goal is to make sure that Toyota drivers are completely confident in the safety and reliability of their vehicles.

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