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## Safety group claims Toyota's acceleration problems caused by electronics

With the words "Toyota Truth" written repeatedly on a large red banner as a backdrop, four non-company safety experts gathered at the National Press Club on Tuesday afternoon to offer their theories on what is causing the Japanese automaker's problems, including runaway acceleration, **The Post's Dana Hedgpeth** reports.

Bottom line to this group: It IS the electronics, despite Toyota's repeated claims to the contrary. Toyota says the acceleration problems are caused by mechanical issues, which are being addressed by its two big recalls.

The panel was moderated by former National Traffic Highway Safety Administration head **Joan Claybrook**, who has been a strong critic of her former agency, saying it is a "lapdog, not a watchdog" for the auto industry.

**Keith Armstrong**, an electronics expert, and his fellow panelists argued that there needs to be a push by NHTSA to have better design safety regulations for the electronics in vehicles. Toyota – or any other automaker – couldn't possibly do enough testing to try out all the scenarios that can cause problems, they say. That, Armstrong has calculated, would require driving one car about 200 million miles or "test 36 vehicles, 24-7, for 10 years."

In his slide show, Armstrong claimed "30 years of empirical evidence overwhelmingly points to sudden acceleration being caused by electronic system faults undetectable by inspection or testing." And he argued that Toyota's gas pedal with its "so-called dual-redundant sensor" isn't reliable because they are only partially redundant. If they fail the same way and at the same time, as Armstrong said in his presentation, "there is no pixie dust."

Toyota has hired an outside consulting group, **Exponent**, to test its vehicles' electronics, and NHTSA is doing the same.

At the same time, a number of electronics experts guess that Toyota's problems could be caused by software glitches that are almost impossible to anticipate and prevent in testing.

Toyota has repeatedly maintained that its software is clean.

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By Frank Ahrens | March 23, 2010; 5:14 PM ET  
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