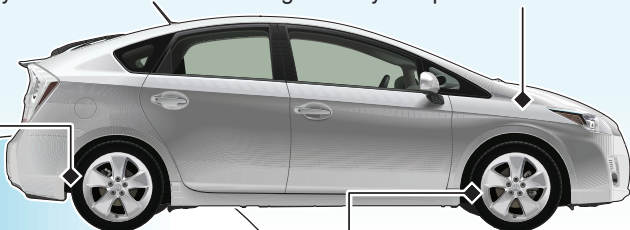


Software blamed for Prius' brakes scare

Toyota is recalling at least 311,000 third generation models of its Prius hybrid car after owners complained of inconsistent braking on rough or slick road surfaces when the ABS anti-lock brake system is activated

Braking system: In addition to traditional hydraulic brakes, Prius has electronic regenerative braking system

As car slows, brakes recover kinetic energy to charge battery that powers electric motor



Engine control unit (ECU): Car's main computer controls switch from petrol engine to electric motor. **Time lag at this stage could delay change from electronic to hydraulic system, causing momentary lapse of brakes**

ABS: Computer measures each wheel's rotation speed and pumps brakes on and off several times a second to prevent skidding, slowing car safely and smoothly

Software: Toyota says alleged problem with brake occurs only when ABS is activated. Software for new Prius increases time from activation of ABS to activation of hydraulic brakes

If problem occurs, Toyota says vehicle can be stopped without any problem by firmly applying foot brake