



Congress Learns That Exponent, Toyota's Independent Expert, Really Hired Gun of its Defense Lawyers

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Today's hearings before Congress on the Toyota sudden acceleration problem got a jolt when [James Lentz, Toyota's U.S. sales chief, testified that the "independent" investigation really wasn't so independent](#) after all.

"Independent" Expert Reporting to Toyota's Defense Team

While Toyota wasn't directly involved with Exponent, the company responsible for the independent investigation into the acceleration problems, its defense counsel was. Seems that the engineering investigators were reporting to Toyota's lawyers.

Lentz told Congress "[t]hat changed last week." Now, Exponent is supposed to be reporting its findings to Steve St. Angelo, Toyota's top quality officer for North America.

[According to USA Today](#), Exponent was hired in December 2009, and has already profited \$3,300,000.00 on its Toyota work.

Exponent Doesn't Have Extensive Testing Documentation

Along with this news flash, it's becoming more apparent to the Committee members that Exponent didn't do the extensive testing that Toyota was telling everyone had been done regarding the sudden acceleration issue.

[The Wall Street Journal quotes Rep. Henry Waxman \(D- Calif.\) today](#): "Toyota has repeatedly told the public that it has conducted extensive testing of its vehicles for electronic defects," Mr. Waxman said. "We can find no basis for these assertions."

Together with Committee Chairman Bart Stupak, Rep. Waxman said today that there's no evidence that Exponent study was as thorough as one would assume it would be: Exponent documentation is scant.

“Exponent has no written work plan for this project, no written time line, and no written specifications for the experiments it has run or plans to run,” Mr. Waxman said (as reported in the WSJ).

Hired Gun 101

The Congressmen appear to be shocked by all this. Those in the know aren't surprised.
Exponent is a known hired gun for the automotive industry.

Nice to see that Congress – and the American public – are getting a chance to see how the powerful insurance defense teams operate out here.