Toyota recalls

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Analogous to local ferries

Toyota’s recent problems with sudden, unexpected acceleration 

"The car-computer conundrum," News, Feb. 5

is reminiscent of the similar problems experienced by the Issaquah-class ferries when they were new.

Their engines were controlled from the pilothouse via computers that proved to be unreliable. They sent erroneous signals to the engines, causing them to speed up or slow down against the wishes of the pilot.

In one case, a computer caused a ferry to pull away from the dock while it was loading cars.

Washington State Ferries solved the problem by junking the computers and replacing them with "tried-and-true" pneumatic controls. Automobile manufactures should take a lesson from this and stick with the tried-and-true mechanical connections between the gas pedal and the engine.

Computers have their place in automotive technology, but where vital functions like steering, braking and engine speed are concerned, they should only advise the driver and not control those functions.

— Bryan Shrader, Port Townsend

America’s double standards

In August 2007, Mattel — the nation’s largest toy maker — recalled 1.5 million Fisher-Price infant toys made in China due to possible lead paint hazards. Later that year, Simplicity Inc. recalled 1 million Chinese-manufactured drop-side cribs following the death of two infants. Both cases shared one thing in common: products carrying American brands, but manufactured in China. Yet, China was made the villain for the simple reason that they were "made in China" and China should therefore take the blame. But if we use the same logic as Chinese toy and crib recalls, the country that manufactured the problematic parts should be blamed. Then, let's all blame America, not Toyota, for making unsafe vehicles. Otherwise, it's really not fair for Toyota. America loves to treat itself and others with double standards.

At least, Toyota CEO Akio Toyoda has apologized. Did Bernie Madoff do the same?

— Yitan Li, Seattle