



## Lawsuit: Rodents eating through Toyota insulation, disabling vehicles

**Soy-coated insulation targeted in class-action lawsuit**

By **Mike Holfeld** - Investigative Reporter

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**ORLANDO, Fla.** - A class action lawsuit blaming soy-coated insulation for a spike in rats, mice and squirrels munching on wires under the hood of certain [Toyota](#) cars and trucks has created new interest in the problem that has been reported by central Florida consumers for decades.

Attorney Brian Kabateck said he has hundreds of complaints with tales of damaged wiring in Toyota vehicles built between 2012 and 2016.

“What we allege in the complaint is that it has attracted a very high number of rodent ... that insulation attracts rodents and other animals, (they) chew the wires, disabling cars,” Kabateck said.

Steve Alfieri, general manager with Russell Automotive in Apopka, said he has seen everything from owls to rats chew away at insulation and plastic in his 25 years in the business.

“You can see teeth marks when they’re under the hood,” Alfieri said. “They also eat hard plastic water bottles; they’re not picky.”

But Alfieri said he doesn't recall any visitors under the hood taking a bite out of a battery case.

Kabateck admits nests and rodent-chewed wires under the hoods of vehicles have been reported for years, but said that there has never been so many incidents for one brand and he thinks the damage should be covered by Toyota.

“The dealers uniformly say that’s not covered under the terms of your warranty and because it’s not covered under the warranty, we’re not paying for it,” Kabateck said.

Kabateck said Toyota needs to change the warranty policy to cover rodent damage to the soy-coated wiring insulation.

Toyota declined to comment on the specific litigation but released this statement:

“...[R]odent damage to vehicle wiring occurs across the industry, and the issue is not brand- or model-specific. We are currently not aware of any scientific evidence that shows rodents are attracted to automotive wiring because of alleged soy-based content.”

Many insurance policies do cover the wiring repair; however, the insurance deductible is on the policy holder.

To prevent rodents from eating through auto parts some consumers swear by mothballs or anti-rodent tape to wrap around the wires, sold at Walmart and Amazon.com. The tape costs around \$20.