



ASK THE MOTOR MEDICS®

Automotive Advice from
the Under The Hood® Show

Dear Motor Medics,

I used the remote start on my 2004 Chevy Silverado to warm it up the other morning and came out to find my interior filled with smoke. I did not see smoke coming out of any particular area so I aired it out and drove to work. I have checked all of the electrical functions and the only thing I find that does not work is the heater fan high speed. Could this be what was smoking?

Thank you,
Steven in Kalamazoo Michigan

Dear Steven,

The interior HVAC blower fan system could have been the source of the smoke. Blower resistor failures are common as vehicles age. The blower windings break down over time and the resistance on the circuit increases, this extra resistance causes the resistor to run much hotter than it should. Eventually the resistor can fail and sometimes it will let off smoke. In addition to the resistor failing some vehicles have issues with the wires that attach to the resistor and the connector plug melting. In the case of the Silverado it is a common issue and some of them were subject to a recall so check with your local dealership for more information. Most important of all to remember is to stop driving a vehicle when you see or smell smoke. Fire spreads quickly in a vehicle and you can be overcome by the fumes of the many materials used in its construction. Always think about your safety first.

Take care,
the Motor Medics.

Dear Motor Medics,

I have a 2007 Chevy Impala with several issues that all occurred about the same time. I have a check engine light on, I have poor cabin heat, and my fuel mileage is not as good as it used to be. What kind of things should I be looking for?

Thank you,
Diane in Wray Colorado

Dear Diane,

It is possible that just one thing is causing all of your problems and that item is small and relatively inexpensive, your engines thermostat. The thermostat is responsible for keeping the engine temperature at a steady level so that you have proper heat available for the interior and proper operating temperature for the engine to operate efficiently. When a thermostat does not allow the engine to warm to a certain level on OBDII vehicles the computer responds by turning on the check engine light. Another effect of low temps is a decrease in fuel mileage due to continued fuel mixture enrichment. In the past, our vehicles used carburetors with chokes on them to enrich the fuel mixture for proper running until the engine was warm. Around the early eighties this changed to electronic fuel injection and is now controlled by the engine computer. If the thermostat does not regulate the engine temperature properly the computer may continue to enrich the fuel mixture causing the vehicle to have poor mileage. Thermostats should be serviced when the coolant is flushed or when they fail to operate as designed.

Take care,
the Motor Medics.

Dear Motor Medics,

I am a loyal Hoody from Canada. I have a 2004 Chrysler 300M with 80,000 miles, that I bought last year. Since I didn't know the car's service history I decided to have the transmission fluid and filter changed as you have indicated in your radio show. As you know, this only replaces some of the fluid therefore I would like to take my car in to have a complete transmission flush done where they will replace all the fluid. Would you say that this is advisable to do at the current mileage?

Thank you,
Lawrence in Canadas

Dear Lawrence,

With this model if it hasn't been done it's a good idea to flush your transmission instead of just dropping the pan and changing the filter and whatever fluid comes out. Removing just the pan to drain the transmission will only result in about 5 quarts out of 15 or so being changed, or roughly 1/3rd of the capacity. That would be like changing only 2 quarts of engine oil each change instead of draining the entire engine. The contaminated fluid will eventually lead to a buildup of deposits on the valves and eventual slipping of the transmission. For a complete flush we recommend adding a cleaner to the transmission then operating through all of the gears and then flush it. Once flushed add a conditioner and you should be set. Most facilities with a flush service should have this option available.

Take care,
the Motor Medics.

Dear Motor Medics,

I enjoy your show and columns very much. I have a 1999 Chevrolet pickup with a v8 and 4wd. I feel I get lousy combined city highway mileage, at last check it was 14mpg. I have heard you advertise a cleaner that might improve gas mileage. I am wondering if it would clog the fuel filter since I have never used it and since I don't know what junk could be in the system now. Do the tank or lines need to be flushed first? Do I just pour it in the tank and go? How often should I use it? Thanks so very much.

Thank you,
Jeanne in South Dakota

Dear Jeanne,

The cleaning we mention on the show is what's commonly referred to as fuel system or induction system cleaning. When a cleaning is properly performed it will clean the intake, injectors, and combustion chambers of the engine bringing back its ability to run efficiently. Carbon deposits in the engine rob its efficiency and this leads to lost mileage and power. You do not need to replace the filter to do this or clean the tank as this is not a pour in product. The pour in products are good in between cleanings but cannot clean as well as the professional system. Your mileage compares with many other vehicles like yours so at this time cleaning the system may not gain you much in the way of mileage if any.

Take care,
the Motor Medics.

Dear Motor Medics,

I have a 2003 GMC Pickup with 125,000 miles. Recently while driving it a light on the dash reads Reduced Engine Power with the check engine lamp on and the vehicle speed is limited to approximately 25 MPH. I had a diagnostic scan which returned a code of P1516 and they said everything they could find pointed to the throttle body actuator. Is it possible that the problem could be the throttle body being dirty and running cleaner through the gas tank will help? If the throttle body needs to be replaced, what should I expect the cost to be? P.S. this has happened about three times in the last 150 miles.

Thank You,
Dwight in Worthing South Dakota

Dear Dwight,

GM light duty trucks now have this type of electric throttle system to control engine speed and cruise control. The system is a very sound one with several sensors to act as backups for the other so the system can tell if there is a failure and can shut it down or limit power for safety. The code you have tells me that the engine has seen a circuit failure in the throttle body. This means the throttle body sensors or the wiring to them may have failed. Cleaning will not help this one or have prevented the failure. You will need to have a shop use a lab scope to read the voltages to verify the problem. Check around for local pricing.

Take care,
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FOR ENTERTAINMENT ONLY

Always consult your local shop and follow all safety procedures before repairs.

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