

CAR TALK

CORVETTE TECH:

For those of you who have Corvette models new enough to be equipped with OnStar, you're probably familiar with the monthly diagnostic reports you can get. The OnStar Vehicle Diagnostics System automatically performs hundreds of diagnostic checks on four systems on OnStar-equipped GM vehicles. The systems checked are the engine and transmission, anti-lock brakes, airbags and then the OnStar system itself. Once a month, OnStar sends an automatically-generated report about the vehicle's systems, as well as maintenance reminders and other information, to the customer. Or at least that's the way it's supposed to work. If the vehicle is not run for an extended period of time, the monthly report won't be monthly. In order for the system to generate a report each month, your car's signal has to be read by OnStar's satellite on a regular basis. They don't say, however, exactly how regularly your car has to establish communication with the satellite. But OnStar's computers will not send a report if they don't have any diagnostic data.

So, if you are paying for OnStar and you find your monthly diagnostic reports are not coming monthly, it might be that you are not driving your car frequently enough. Yeah. That gives you a new excuse to get the Vette out and just go somewhere once in a while.

REGULATORY NEWS: (*Thanks to the SEMA Action Network*)

As I'm sure you recall, in 2004, legislation was enacted to repeal California's rolling emissions-test exemption for vehicles 30 years old and older and replace it with a law requiring the lifetime testing of all 1976 and newer model-year vehicles. This year, a bill has been introduced in the California Senate (S.B. 1224) by Senator Doug LaMalfa to exempt all motor vehicles prior to the 1981 model year from the emissions inspection requirement.

- S.B. 1224 recognizes the minimal impact of pre-1981 vehicles on emissions and air quality.

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- S.B. 1224 acknowledges that pre-1981 vehicles still constitute a minuscule portion of the overall vehicle population and are a poor source from which to look for emissions reductions.
- S.B. 1224 endorses the fact that pre-1981 vehicles are overwhelmingly well-maintained and infrequently driven.
- For years, legislators, regulators and stationary source polluters have felt the heat from failed efforts to meet air quality goals and have looked to older cars as a convenient scapegoat, using false data and inflated annual mileage assumptions to further their case. S.B. 1224 helps validate the truth. The old car hobby should not continue to carry the burden of past mistakes!

The bill was supposed to be considered in the Senate Transportation and Housing Committee on March 27, but was postponed into April. I haven't heard any results, yet, but I'll let you know when I do.

TRUE STORIES:

The thermostat in my Vette had been opening too early for awhile and I figured it would be an easy fix one Saturday morning. No big deal, two bolts, easy access. I got it back together and headed to town for coffee to celebrate a job well done.

Well, I didn't get very far before the car started to overheat, so I pulled off the road. I thought maybe I'd just gotten some air in the system because I did lose maybe a quart of coolant in the process. So I waited while things cooled off and added a little coolant and left the cap loose so air could escape. I didn't get far before it heated up again, and again, and again.

I finally had to give up and take the car to a real mechanic. Fortunately, he didn't charge me much for the repair, but he did write in great big letters on the sales receipt EXACTLY what he did to fix it, ***“Removed thermostat, turned it over, reinstalled the right direction.”***