

Wheels: Charlie wrote that he has a 2001 van and a supply of Mobil 1 dating back to 2002 and he has some questions. Is the oil safe to use? What is the maximum shelf life? Would how the oil is stored affect shelf life? Do different brands of oil have different shelf life? Could the oil be tested? The code on the label contains "02". Is this the date?"

Halderman: According to the research I have read, and to experts I have talked with, the shelf life of oil is not a big concern. It is possible for some of the additives to fall out of suspension but I think if you shake the container before using the oil that this would address this concern.

The oil was made under the standards of about four years ago and new standards have been developed but that is not a concern when using it in your 2001 van as long as the viscosity rating is the same as recommended by the vehicle manufacturer. I do not know the maximum shelf life. I would not use oil that is 10 years old. I think common knowledge would make you think that extreme temperatures would affect the oil more than a constant temperature. However, the container is sealed so moisture would not be a major concern in my opinion.

I would think that a synthetic oil like Mobil 1 would have a longer shelf life than conventional mineral oil due to the fact that it is one molecular compared to tens or hundreds in conventional oil that could affect it over time.

Yes, the oil could be tested, but the cost of analysis would likely exceed the cost of the oil and could only be compared to new oil with limits that are known to cause problems but this information is based on oil used in an engine. I don't think a test would be valid.

The date code is commonly printed on labels for inventory control purposes. It would make sense that the "02" would mean 2002.

