

Wheels: Bob writes, “My 1993 Cadillac began overheating after a front-end collision. At first there was no sign of coolant leakage. There was a loss of coolant from the system, but nothing on the ground. A local shop claimed to find a loose hose clamp, a bad hose, and a leak at the radiator tank. Everything was repaired, but the car is still overheating. The local shop now thinks we might have a cracked head and want to run a compression test on the cylinders to determine which cylinder is cracked. They say they can also tell by this test if it is the block, head, or gasket leaking, and if it is due to the accident or just normal wear and tear. I believe they can narrow it down to one or two cylinders with a compression test, but I don’t think they can determine whether it is a cracked head, a cracked cylinder, or when the leak started. Is there a test that can determine when an engine overheated and cracked a head/cylinder wall?”

Halderman: Yes, there is a tool that allows the technician to test for exhaust gasses in the cooling system. See the attached photo of one example. This tester is used to check for combustion gases, from the cylinder, in the coolant, which surrounds the cylinders. I am not aware of any test that could be performed that could indicate *when* the fault occurred. A cylinder leakage test and a compression test can often indicate a problem between two cylinders that are side-by-side, which normally indicates a head gasket leakage problem.

