

Wheels: Brent asked my opinion on the following problem. “I am working with my 1988 GMC pickup with a “K” 350 engine that I rebuilt in the spring of 2001. The engine is consuming a lot of oil, a quart/400 miles. I put about 4000-5000 miles a year on the truck. I replaced both head gaskets in January, 1997 (one was blown) and did a valve job with guides and seals while they were off so I assume the heads were good when I torqued them back on during the rebuild. The truck rarely presents smoke at start-up. The PCV system has strong vacuum at idle. The vehicle seems to consume more oil at highway speeds than when in town, but doesn’t usually present blue smoke. It does not leak at all and build-up is present on the spark plugs so I’m convinced it is going out the tailpipe.

I’ve hit a wall with this and would appreciate your help.”

Halderman: The most likely cause of excessive oil consumption is due to the valve stem seals. Now that you have a new short block, the vacuum has increased. Besides, most oil usage is due to the valve stem seals rather than past the rings. Other possible oil usage causes include:

- Clogged PCV hoses or vents creating excessive crankcase pressure
- External leaks into the exhaust through a crack in the cylinder head

Internal leaks into the intake manifold where the oil would be drawn into the cylinders and burned with little, if any, smoke visible from the tailpipe.

