

Wheels: Craig writes, “I have been having a small amount of coolant dripping from the right side of my engine. The vehicle has approximately 86,000 miles on it. When I took it to a local shop to check it out, they informed me that it was the water pump going out. They wanted to install a new one and replace all of the belts and timing belt while they were at it. Total cost would run around \$725.00 and they were trying to get me to have it done that day. (They had all the parts in stock.)

I have checked with a couple of friends who know the mechanics of an auto and they said that most of what they are talking about sounds OK as far as replacing the timing belt while they are in there, but the other belts, if not worn out, would not be necessary. I am currently not driving it and have noticed the past couple of days that there is no coolant leaking now, where as before there would be small amounts under the car. Do you feel that the cost to do this work is high, and since it does not appear to be leaking now, that they are just misleading me? They did run a coolant leak detection test with pressure and dye. Any suggestions besides having another place or mechanic check it out?”

Halderman: I can see why you are concerned about the cost of a repair, but in this case, the price and the services seem reasonable. If you are concerned about the leak, go to another shop or dealer and ask for an estimate. As a general rule of thumb, it is wise to replace all the belts whenever the water pump is replaced because the belts are already off and the labor is the same whether the belts are replaced. This would save you money in the long run.

