

Wheels: An e-mail from Ernest says, “I have a 1986 Mustang that is only driven a couple hundred miles per year. It has developed a problem of leaking transmission fluid. My first thought is that the front seal is leaking since the leak is between the engine and transmission. However, what disturbs me is that the transmission never leaks as long as the automobile is not to operating temperature. It only leaks on hot days when the system temperature is up to operating temperature. At which time, it can then drop a quart of fluid in five miles. I would think that at all temperatures you would see some leakage but more at hot temperatures. The coolant lines are not leaking. What else could be causing the leak at high temperatures other than a seal or should I just go ahead and replace the front seal.”

Halderman: The front seal is the most common location for ATF leakage, however there are other places that can also leak around this area. These include the pump seal and/or around the pump retaining bolts. Because you do not drive very far, the most likely cause is the front seal. I would suggest that you have the unit removed and have all the seals replaced including the oil pan gasket. A stuck pressure regulator valve can also cause the transmission fluid pressure to exceed normal operating pressure, which can help explain why the fluid runs out but only when hot. The heat could be causing the valve to stick. A good transmission technician can check for proper pressures using a pressure gauge that screws into a threaded test port on the side of the unit.

