

Wheels: A faithful reader writes, “I have used Mobil 1 in two cars that have gone over 150,000 miles with no excessive usage or leakage problems. I change them every 5,000 miles. It works! I have a newer 2001 Ford Taurus with 50,000. I want to change the transmission fluid but there are several methods I’ve looked at and would appreciate your opinion:

- A. Standard method – drop the pan and replace only 4-5 quarts of fluid.
- B. Suck the fluid out of the pan with a siphon/hose.
- C. Disconnect the return line on the transmission and pump fluid out using the engine/transmission to pump out what is in the pan. Replace and repeat.
- D. Go to the quick lube shops that use the Wynn flushing machines.
- E. Take to a transmission shop that will drop the pan and flush from the bottom of the transmission (obviously best, but expensive).

I am concerned about putting flushing agents into the transmission to remove varnish and such.

Halderman: Any of the methods will achieve the result specified by the vehicle manufacturer. I prefer the standard method (your letter A) mainly because the method allows the service technician the opportunity to inspect the pan for wear metals and to check to see if there are any magnetic particles, which indicate a serious problem. Also, when the transmission pan is removed, the filter can be changed, which is part of the specified service according to most vehicle manufacturers.

You are correct that only about one-third of the fluid will be changed during this procedure, but if it is repeated regularly, the automatic transmission fluid should perform satisfactorily. For best transmission performance, always use the fluid recommended by the vehicle manufacturer.

NOTE: Automatic transmission fluid that is highly friction modified will often darken within the first 10,000 to 15,000 miles of use and does not indicate that it should be changed or that there is a transmission problem. It is considered to be normal.

