

Wheels: Stephan wrote with a question concerning his 1999 Grand Am. “The car has approximately 90,000 miles on it and I mainly drive highway miles. About two weeks ago, while I was sitting at a red light, my traction control light came on (although the car was not moving at all). The light went off again, but continued to come on again regularly. Maybe two days later, while I was driving on a dry highway, my traction control off light came on and my ABS light came on and stayed on. I immediately consulted my handbook and read that the car needed to be serviced, but the manual stated that the regular brakes would operate. I took the car to a Pontiac dealership and it put the car on the computer. The dealership’s diagnosis is that I need a new speed control sensor and a new wire harness, both for the front left wheel. The cost estimation for the replacement is \$750 (\$500 parts, plus labor).

My question is three-fold: (A) Do I compromise my safety or the safety of others by not having the sensor and the wiring harness replaced immediately? My regular brakes should work just fine, correct? (B) In case the sensor and wiring harness do not need to be replaced immediately, is there any long-term damage to the ABS or the traction control system if I don’t replace the parts right away? (C) What can I do to “disconnect” the ABS and traction control light temporarily so it won’t come on every time I start the car. Thank you very much in advance for your help.”

Halderman: Thanks for writing. (A) It is OK not to repair the wheel speed sensor and wiring harness because you will still have normal brakes but the ABS and traction control function is disabled. (B) No damage will occur if you delay having the sensor replaced. (C) While you could have the amber warning lamp disconnected, I would not recommend that you do this because it will be a reminder to you to have the problem corrected and the safety features of your vehicle restored as soon as possible.

