

Wheels: An e-mail from Kay reads, “I own a 1992 Lexus ES300 (previously owned) which I purchased almost a year ago. It has had no problems except this one – which is not an everyday thing. When the weather turns really cold – and since we have had a mild winter for the most part here, this has not occurred very often – the brakes seem frozen. The first time it happened, it caught me by surprise as I pulled away from home and came to the first stop street (a half block away). I literally had to press with all my force to get the car to stop. I slowly eased out and pumped the brakes a little at a time and eventually they relaxed and all seemed OK until the next time it got really cold. Now I go through a routine each morning that I think it is “cold” enough, of pressing the brake pedal several times until it relaxes. All other times the brakes work just fine. Is this a signal that something is really wrong with the brakes or just a temperamental thing. We do not park in a garage, so the car sits outdoors all the time. Any ideas?”

Halderman: The problem could be due to water freezing, forming ice in the vacuum booster assembly. Normally, this moisture is drawn into the engine and does not accumulate unless you drive a short distance and not very often. If this could be the situation, I would recommend that you drive the vehicle on a trip lasting over an hour to purge any moisture from the engine. Another possible cause is a leak in the vacuum brake booster or a stuck vacuum check valve.

