

Wheels: A question from EJD asked, “I took my 2001 Buick Century (26,000 miles) back to the dealer for service. It has been garaged every night since new and is in good shape. The Service Writer came into the waiting room a short while later and suggested a few things that could be done. One, he told me my brake fluid was turning green and wanted to know if I wanted it changed. This one was a new one on me and I let it pass.

When I returned to my garage, I put a drop of brake fluid on a white piece of plastic and indeed, it had a slight green cast. I asked a “shade tree mechanic” about this, and he said he thought some brake fluids were green. Is this a problem? Does brake fluid wear out and turn green? Should the brake fluid be replaced?”

Haldeman: Good question. The only green brake fluid is hydraulic oil used in the French Citroen, which has not been imported to this country for many years. Brake fluid is either amber or clear and usually changes to brown or black as it absorbs moisture and rust from the brake system. Brake fluid is a glycol and absorbs moisture at the rate of about 3% per year. Because the vehicle is about six years old, about 18% has been absorbed. I think the green color is a result of algae growing in the fluid or from the copper sealing washers used in some brake systems. Should it be changed? General Motors Corp. says to replace the fluid if it is contaminated and it looks like this is what has happened. I would replace the brake fluid. Changing the brake fluid is not a do-it-yourself job. All four bleeder valves will have to be opened and these can be broken, requiring the replacement of the wheel cylinders and/or calipers. Professional technicians have techniques that help reduce the possibility of broken bleeder valves, but it can still happen, especially in the Ohio area where road salt contributes to rust of under vehicle components.

