

Wheels: Kelli writes, “I noticed your column in the Dayton Daily News and thought why not ask. I have a 2003 Chevrolet Venture Van I purchased new. At 17,875 miles, I took it to a dealership due to grinding brakes. They found the rear brake drums and shoes glazed. They R&R the drums to machine deglaze the rear shoes. At 25, 272 miles, the van is back at the dealership and they found the left rear wheel cylinder has a torn seal; the leaking shoe is contaminated. The left rear drum is glazed, the right rear drum is not true (bent), and the front rotors are rusted. They replaced the left wheel cylinder, relined the rear brakes, machined the left drum and front rotors, replaced the right drum, and bled the system. At 28,160 and 31,140 respectively, I have taken it back to the dealership with the same grinding metal on metal sound. Each time they have told me this is typical for this van and that nothing is wrong with the brakes. I am concerned that I am getting the run around. Is it, as they say, normal for the brakes to sound like this on this type of van?”

Halderman: All of the brake work does seem unusual. I think a lot of the problem could be due to the weather, how often the van is driven, and how hard the brakes are used. Rust will form on the rotors and drums, and even the brake pads can rust because they are made using steel and other metals. It is not unusual to hear noisy brakes when the brakes are applied the first thing in the morning. This can happen when driving out the garage or driveway or at the first or second stop of the day. If this is when the noise is heard, then consider this to be normal. Try making more aggressive stops after hearing the noise. The friction of the pads against the rotors will often clean the rust from the friction surfaces.

Some additional thoughts or ideas include:

1. Has the vehicle sat for long periods of time? If so, then this could explain why the rotors were rusty and may also explain some of the faults with the rear drum brakes. When storing a vehicle, try to locate a dry garage.
2. Driving style could affect the brakes as well. The glazing of the brake linings could be the result of a parking brake being left applied or by using the brakes when descending a long hill or grade. If driving down a long hill or grade, and especially if there are signs posted to use a lower gear, do so. Move the gear selector into “2” or “L.” This allows the engine to brake the vehicle so that constant use of the brakes is not necessary.

