

Wheels: Russ of Centerville writes, “I read the January 5th article about a quirky speedometer in a 1991 Chevy Cavalier. I have a somewhat similar situation in our 1995 Ford Taurus SE sedan. When driving on an interstate at about 65 mph, our speedometer “needle” will suddenly go divergent and start swinging wildly for about a minute, then finally settle down and operate normally. Sometimes it will “peg” several times at the max limit, also. This is the second unit in this car since we bought it used at about 32,000 miles in late 1996. The first unit was replaced just within warranty a few months after purchase for also swinging wildly. I am told there is no third party unit available and that this case, too, may need ground points checked. Help! Do I get a replacement and/or have someone check/clean ground connections? Incidentally, the tachometer remains steady as a rock during the quirky behavior. The Taurus has around 70,000 miles on it now.”

Halderman: I would first have the alternator checked for proper operation including a check of the AC voltage (ripple). If just one diode is bad, the alternator can produce normal output (in amperes), yet create excessive AC ripple (over 0.4 volts is considered excessive). If this test proves that the alternator is OK, then I would have all the grounds tested or additional ground wires installed between the engine and the body.

