

Wheels: An e-mail from Paul says, "I have a 1999 Buick LeSabre with a 3.8, V6 engine. It runs like a watch, if and when you can get it to start. You don't even get a click out of it when you turn the key on. It may start the first time, but the next time nothing happens. I have replaced the battery, starter, ignition switch, and the harness that runs down the steering column, at the suggestion of several mechanics, including my Buick dealer.

I have taken the car in to mechanics and it starts just fine. They say they have no way to check it out and shrug their shoulders. This problem has been going on for about 2 years.

I have checked with Buick Customer Service to see if they had a recall on the problem or any history. They said no to both questions. One mechanic indicated, off the record, that he thought it had been recalled.

Do you have any suggestion or information that could be of help?"

Halderman: I have a few ideas, including checking for a defective battery cable, especially at the positive post of the battery. Corrosion in this area can cause your problems, so be sure to have the cable itself tested using a voltage drop test. There should be less than 0.2 volt drop between the positive battery post and the starter during cranking.

If the battery and cables are OK, then another possible cause is hydrostatic lock caused by coolant entering the cylinders past a gap in the intake manifold. If the coolant level is low, I would have that possibility checked by a professional service technician. Both of these concerns are pattern failure items for this vehicle.

