

Wheels: An e-mail from Don says, “I have a 1999 Mercury Grand Marquis with 36,000 miles that has developed a starting problem or, I should say a re-start problem. After driving several miles or reaching normal temperature range, and then shutting it down for some 25 minutes, it refuses to re-start. It restarts with a cold engine. The battery is fully charged and the terminals, including solenoid terminals, are clean and tight. There are no clicking noises. A Ford dealer did a diagnostics test with no negative results (but I think they did it on a relatively cold engine). They replaced the starter solenoid pigtail wire just on a precautionary basis. I replaced the starter relay on a wild change, but the problem prevails.

The only unusual thing that may be contributory is a tendency for the anti-theft system to engage. This happened shortly after getting the car. After unlocking the car and starting the engine, it would immediately die. We learned that a re-locking and re-unlocking routine seemed to cure this situation, at least until recently. (We even got into some really bizarre routines, thinking you had to get out of sight of the car before this would work.)”

Halderman: Even though the anti-theft system could be the cause, for now I am assuming it is a starter or cranking circuit fault. The ignition switch could be the cause. The connections must be clean and tight at the starter and at the engine block for current to flow. Heat causes metal to expand and connections can become loose after the engine reaches normal operating temperatures. You stated that the battery terminals are clean and tight, but you did not mention the connections at the starter or block. The battery itself is a likely cause, too. A poor or loose internal connection could be the cause. Try a substitute battery and see if the problem still occurs.

