

Wheels: Roland W. from Vandalia writes: “I have some questions about automotive windshield wipers. I am hoping you can answer them for me.

I have been driving for almost 60 years and, in my opinion, one of the worst things that automakers ever did was change the way that windshield wipers operate. This "new" way of the wipers working in tandem is dangerous and annoying. Dangerous in that the passenger side wiper throws the rain or snow into the driver's line of sight. Annoying in the way that when the wipers are turned off there is usually a streak or I should say, a line left that is either in the drivers line of sight or is in such a place that it is distracting. When and why was the operation of wipers changed? Are there any mid-priced range cars that still have the non-tandem type of wipers? Is there any way to change the operation of the wipers from the "new" way to the "old" way? Thank you.”

Halderman: Thanks for writing. As often occurs, your question required me to do some research into the way wipers today are designed as compared to the 1950's and 1960's. The Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE) creates standards for most systems used on vehicles and there was a standard published in 1973 that addresses your question. The standard (SAE J903c) specifies that the viewing area be wiped and that 80 percent of glass area be included. The older design wipers did not sweep in the center of the windshields and, as a result, could reduce visibility of the driver in this un-swept area. The only vehicle that still uses two wipers that sweep independently on each side is the Dodge Viper sports car. To allow the wipers to sweep in the center of the windshield, the wipers had to overlap. Making this happen required that a computer be used to connect both wipers so if one wiper slowed down due to snow load or a some other cause, the other wiper would also slow down so that they overlapped in the middle as designed. Some Mercedes models use just one wiper but it requires a very complex mechanism to allow it to move up and down as it sweeps across in order to cover the windshield.

Sorry, but I do not see how the wipers can be converted to the “old” way.

If you are having trouble seeing when the wipers are working, try increasing or decreasing the speed to see if this helps.

