

**Wheels:** A recent e-mail from a regular reader of Straight Talk asks, “I bought a used four-door Saturn. The car looks like new, but when I started using the air conditioner in May, the mildew odor was really strong. The service man tried to convince me this had happened since I had bought the car and they assumed no responsibility, since the weather had been hot and humid. Could this condition have happened in just the three weeks that I have owned the car? Since this was not covered by warranty, I paid \$176 to have the air conditioner flushed out. I continued to spray the air vents, located near the window wipers, with Lysol. Since I still have the odor, I was told the odor was in the upholstery. The operator at a car wash said “NO” that the odor was coming from the air vents. A friend of his, a refrigerator and air-conditioner dealer, told him to shut off the air conditioner about five minutes before turning off the engine to allow the system to dry out. This is September and there is still an odor. Any suggestions about treating this problem?”

**Halderman:** It sounds as if you do have a mildew odor and should be treated using a very specific procedure that is described in detail in a GM service bulletin. GM dealers have access to this bulletin, as well as the kit that should be used (Bulletin #99-01-39-004A). The kit contains the cooling coil coating used to stop microbial growth and is the only General Motors approved product to eliminate this concern. It involves removing the heater resistors or drilling a small hole and spraying the evaporator with a chemical that will dry on the fins and lasts a long time to prevent the odor from returning. You stated that you had the system flushed out, but that will not prevent the mildew from coming back unless it is treated. Your air conditioning expert is correct that the AC should be turned off for a few minutes before turning off the engine to help keep the area around the evaporator dry, but this will not kill the mildew you have in the system now. I hope this information is helpful.

