

Wheels: *Ron H. writes by e-mail: "I know you have heard the horror stories about changing spark plugs in the Ford 4.6 and 5.4 engines. I have a 2004 F150 and was thinking of changing the plugs with 63000 miles on them. I was told the more miles you put on them the harder they are to get out! I know Ford has put out a technical service bulletin (TSB) about these plugs. Do you think a weekend mechanic can change the plugs without breaking them? Do you know of a better way to get them out?"*

Halderman: Thanks for asking before you started work on removing these spark plugs. The design of the plugs results in a section of the plug that is smaller and weaker, which can cause them to break when being removed. When they break, it is sometimes necessary to remove the cylinder head to remove the broken off plug. It does not stop there. To remove the cylinder head, the cab of the truck usually has to be lifted off the frame. Therefore, it is wise that you ask a professional to replace these spark plugs. While some may be able to be removed without breaking, in most cases at least a few or more will require extensive work and time to remove. The usual procedure is to follow the TSB released by Ford that specifies the use of a penetrating oil and specific spark plug rotation during removal. Most technicians use a kit that includes special fittings that can be used to remove most of the plugs. However, most shops will estimate an hour per spark plug for replacement so save your money for the \$800+ repair bill.

