

Wheels: Doug of Kettering writes, “I have a Chevy S-10 short bed truck with automatic overdrive and a 2.8-liter V-6 fuel-injection engine. It has been well maintained with one owner. The truck does not have A/C. Nor does it have power brakes. It does not burn oil, and the tailpipe is not smoky. When not in use, it is parked in the garage. It has 55,000 miles on it. About 7-8 months ago, I noticed my gas mileage dropping by about 5 mpg. I have replaced the following: the plugs, distributor cap, wiring, rotor, air filter, PVC valve, hot thermostat, and the oxygen sensor. I had a front-end alignment, had the transmission rebuilt and bought two new front tires. The truck runs well, and the engine light has never come on. In cold weather, I expect the mileage to drop by 1-2 mpg. I was getting approximately 19-20 mpg on short runs, driving 35-50 mph. For highway driving, I was getting up to 23-25 mpg. Now, however, I get 13 mpg on short runs and about 17 mpg on highways. I am driving the same routes I always have. What’s my problem? Thanks for your help.”

Halderman: A drop of fuel economy can often occur if there is a fault in the charcoal canister purge control valve or the vacuum diaphragm. A fault in this area usually does not affect engine operation but it can cause a drop of 4 to 5 miles per gallon and this is the amount your fuel economy has dropped. Have a service technician check to see if all vacuum diaphragms can hold a vacuum. It has been my experience that the charcoal canister itself may have to be replaced to cure the problem because once it is saturated with liquid fuel, it is difficult to restore to proper operation. The canister itself is relatively light in weight because it is made from plastic and contains activated granular charcoal. It is relatively heavy, then you know it is fuel saturated.

