

Wheels: We have an E-mail from a reader who has a 1996 Aurora with 72,000 miles on the odometer. The reader states that the accelerator sticks, especially the first time the engine is started. Do you have any ideas as to what can cause this?

Halderman: There are several possible causes for the throttle to stick. One is that the throttle plate (the valve that actually moves to allow more air into the engine) could be sticking or deposits that have built up inside the throttle bores. This is very common on engines equipped with port fuel injection. The intake bore of the throttle plate can be cleaned using spray carburetor or air intake cleaner. A small brass brush (or an old toothbrush) can be used to help remove the deposits from the housing.

Wheels: What causes these deposits and will I harm the engine by cleaning the throttle plate?

Halderman: The deposits form naturally due to fumes from the crankcase that are routed into the intake manifold near the engine side of the throttle plate(s). As these fumes cool, they condense and eventually build up over time until the throttle sticks on the gooey deposits. These deposits can also cause a hesitation on acceleration, a rough idle at times, or in severe cases, the engine could stall, especially after being driven on the highway. It may take the use of an entire spray can of throttle body cleaner to clean the deposits. Except for some Ford Motor Co. vehicles, the cleaning will not harm the engine or the throttle body. Some Ford vehicles have a coating on the inside of the throttle plate to help keep the deposits from sticking.

Wheels: You mentioned that there are two possible causes to a stuck throttle. Besides the deposits in the throttle body, what is the second possible cause?

Halderman: The second possible cause is a kink in the throttle cable. This is a very dangerous possibility that should be checked because this damaged cable could cause the throttle to stick at other times and this could cause an accident if it occurs while you are driving. This is so important that General Motors Corp. has released a service bulletin stating that service technicians are to replace the throttle cable if the engine has been removed. This precaution is to prevent the possibility that the throttle cable could have been deformed or kinked during the engine replacement. Look for any signs of kinking of the cable especially if service work has been done to the vehicle such as resealing of the intake manifold. Service technicians often disconnect the throttle cable and linkage during an assembly and place it to the side of the engine compartment to make working on the engine easier.

