

Wheels: Dave writes, “I have a 1981 Pontiac Grand Prix with 69,000 miles. The voltage light stays on at all times (sometimes faint and sometimes bright). I pulled the alternator and had it checked by a parts supply house and they indicated it was okay. Also I swapped batteries with another vehicle, but to no avail. I have noticed a “clicking sound” during warm-up (similar to an air-conditioning compressor clutch). I recently replaced the plugs when the car failed e-check. Could it be a distributor/coil problem? Please advise.”

Halderman: The good news is the most likely cause of the dim “charge” or “voltage” dash warning light is due to a bad diode trio inside the alternator. This will not affect the operation or the output, but will cause the dash light to come on at times. While you could replace just the diode trio, the price of the labor and the part often exceed the price of a rebuilt alternator. The “clicking” sound could be due to sparks jumping inside the distributor cap. A replacement rotor, spark plug wires, and cap may be necessary to correct this problem because all three work together and if a plug wire is bad, the high-voltage spark will try to flow to ground and will often arc through the rotor and/or cap.

