

Wheels: An e-mail from Mike says, “I have a 2002 Grand Marques and it seems like under the warranty I had to change the gas line filter at 24,000 miles in order to keep my warranty in effect. I could be wrong on the exact miles, but I know I had to change it prior to the 36,000 mile deadline for the warranty to keep it in effect. However, I have an old beater of a Dodge van that has 19,500 miles on it and judging from the undercoating spray on the gas line filter, I would bet it is the original one and it seems to run fine. What are your views on changing the gas line filters? I’ve bought other cars new and don’t recall there being such a requirement, not do I recall the gas line filters being a concern until the car runs rough, and then mechanics seem to want to change the filters. More often than not, changing the filters never helped.”

Halderman: Fuel filters should be replaced according to the vehicle manufacturer’s recommended interval. That is easier said than done because, since the 1990s, many vehicles are equipped with returnless-type fuel injection. In older systems, fuel was recirculated back to the fuel tank and therefore, the fuel was sent through the filter many times. With a returnless system, the fuel flows through the filter only once. As a result, the fuel filters are not replaced as part of routine maintenance like they were many years ago. Also, the new filters are usually built into the fuel pump assembly, which costs several hundred dollars. On your older vehicle, I suggest that the fuel filter be replaced every year or so because it is relatively inexpensive and can help prevent problems with other components such as fuel injectors.

