

Wheels: Howard writes, “I have a 1980 GMC van that has over 165,000 miles on it and it runs real well. I have not been able to run it for the past year as I would go out in it and it would fire up and run like a top and then it wouldn’t start. It would turn over, but not fire. I was driving it one day and it was going great until I crossed a busy street and it just stopped running. It just stopped like a person reached over and turned the ignition off. I shifted into neutral and coasted along trying to start it. I was able to get it to turn over but not to fire. I towed it home and with that, it fired up several hours later. I was told that it was the module but I have had it tested several times and they let it get good and hot to try and get it to fail and it was as sound as could be. I tested the alternator and even used my meter to test the pickup coil and got nothing in the way of a problem. What jives? I am trying to keep the thing as an RV. I even replaced the cap and rotor.”

Halderman: I think the most likely cause of the no-spark condition is a fault with the pickup coil. I think your truck is equipped with a vacuum advance and this movement can cause the wires to break between the coil and the module (the white and green wires). If just one of these is partially broken, it can cause your problem. You stated that you tested the pickup with a meter. It should measure 500 to 1500 ohms of resistance after you disconnect the pickup connector from the module. The module also has to have heat conductive grease applied on the metal part of the module where it contacts the distributor to help conduct heat away. This can also be the problem. To replace the pickup coil, the distributor has to be removed. I would suggest you ask a professional service technician to handle this job.

