

**Wheels:** An e-mail from Don says, “Maybe I’m getting a little paranoid in my old age, but here is an interesting incident. I have a 1999 Grand Marquis that is a great car but it seems to have a somewhat temperamental electrical/electronic system. Shortly after we bought it, it developed a start-stall problem, which I solved by replacing the starter relay. Then a few weeks ago, I had to park for eight hours in a hospital parking lot. When I came out to go home, the car started to do the same thing again, starting and stopping. Fortunately, I finally got it going. It did the same thing the next day. I got a spare relay and had no further problems. Could some stray signal from the hospital have impacted the car’s electrical/electronic system (we were parked very close to the building)? Hospitals, of course, must be loaded with all kinds of electromagnetic propagation and I wonder if this could have had some effect?”

**Halderman:** While there could be something to your electromagnetic interference (EMI) theory, the most common cause is a defective or stuck idle air control (IAC) valve. I checked the archives at the International Automotive Technicians Network ([www.iatn.net](http://www.iatn.net)) and the IAC was the item listed as being the most common cause of your problem. Carbon buildup in the throttle plate area can also be a cause. What is happening is that the IAC is not providing the higher idle speed necessary to keep the engine running when it is cold and first started. After the engine warms up, the position of the IAC allows enough air into the engine for normal operation.

