

Wheels:

J.P.R. writes by e-mail

"I want to install new spark plugs in my 2003 Buick Regal. It has a 3.8 liter 6 cylinder. I pulled one of the plug wires and a spiral spring popped out of the boot. I was able to push the boot back onto the plug (with the wire still in place) and everything seems to be fine. I checked the dealer's parts department and also several auto parts stores, but no one carries a replacement set with this spiral wire in the boot. One person thought it might be a type of boot reinforcement and another referred to it as a coil boot, but didn't seem to have any further information on it. I believe these are original wires since they have the firing order numbers marked on them which I understand are not marked on replacement wires. Also, what is the purpose of the metal cylinder on each rubber plug boot? Thanks for any info you can provide."

Halderman:

The spark plug wires like many components used today are designed to last the life of the vehicle. Starting in 1996, the vehicle manufacturer has to replace the vehicle computer or the catalytic converter if it fails within eight years or 80,000 miles. If a fault occurs in the ignition system, the unburned gasoline from the resulting misfire could cause damage to the catalytic converter. As a result, the wires are made so that they will provide high voltage to the spark plug even if they become loose. That is the purpose of the spiral coil in my opinion. The metal cylinder on each plug boot is a heat shield used to protect the boot from the heat from the nearby exhaust manifold. While the coil spiral may not be available, try to find high-quality replacement spark plugs from a known brand name manufacturer. Use of the heat shields on the new wires is also recommended. I use a dab of silicone dielectric grease in the boots of the spark plug wire to help keep moisture out of the connection between the wire terminal and the spark plug.

