

Wheels: A letter from Marilyn in Kettering states, “I am having a problem with my 1989 Honda Accord Exi. It acts like it is vapor locking and happens mostly in the summer when it is humid. When it has been driven for a bit and then turned off, it won’t start back up. I get from point A to point B fine. When I go to leave point B the car won’t start. It turns over, flutters, but never fires up. If I wait 10 minutes, it will usually fire right back up. The car never indicates it is hot, or even above normal temperature. It always has gas, etc. I’ve had several Honda mechanics look at my car but they come away empty-handed. The strange thing is, I have had numerous people tell me that their Hondas in the 1988-92 range have this same problem.

I have had the carburetor replaced, the distributor, tried all grades of gas from regular to premium. I have had every conceivable part changed (starting with a relay wire) at considerable expense, which I can ill afford. I have been told to “just sell the car and buy a new one.” This, of course, is out of the question as I only have 37,256 miles on the car and it is in mint condition. I dread the coming of summer because of this problem. I have tried every service dealer in town and one independent. P.S. This problem has been ongoing for at least 6 years.”

Halderman: The first item I noticed was that your vehicle is over 12 years old and has less than 40,000 miles on it. This means that you drive very little or not very far. The most obvious fault would be clogged idle bleed holes in the carburetor. Because the carburetor has been replaced, and the same problem occurs, there has to be another cause. There are several possible causes including:

- There could be carbon on the backside of the intake valves or in the combustion chamber. The carbon deposits are porous and absorb gasoline and usually affect cold weather starting or driveability. However, I have seen carbon cleaning cure this type of concern in warm weather. A good decarbonization using top engine cleaner or a specialized machine would be the first step.
- A weak ignition system could be the cause because it requires a higher voltage to fire a lean air-fuel mixture that is common when the engine and the outside temperature are high compared to colder weather and engine temperature. A weak coil could be the cause here and the part was not mentioned in your letter as being checked or replaced. A service technician should use a spark tester to verify the coil is capable of producing at least 25,000 volts.
- A problem with the evaporative control system such as a fuel saturated carbon canister could contribute to your problem. Have you been overfilling your tank when you fill the tank with gasoline? If so, the canister could be saturated requiring replacement.

