

Wheels: Gary writes, “I recently had the E-Check done on my 1989 Grand Am. It has a Quad-4 engine. It passed OK, but the NO_x was very close to the limit (1247 versus 1258). I drive the car a few thousand miles during the summer. I am out of the country 8 months of the year (Sept. to May). During that time, I store the car in my garage. What can I do to improve the NO_x reading two years from now?”

Halderman: Normally, excessive NO_x emissions are caused by a fault in the exhaust gas recirculation (EGR) system, but your engine does not use EGR. Another cause of excessive NO_x emissions is a lean air-fuel mixture or a hot running engine due to a cooling system problem. Another more likely cause is excessive compression due to carbon buildup in the combustion chamber. I suggest that you have the engine decarbonized before the next time you have the vehicle checked. By the way, this procedure really helps the way an engine runs and I recommend that this be performed every 30,000 miles or so, depending on the type of driving. The more slow city-type driving, the more often carbon has a chance to buildup.

I also recommend the use of Techron in the gas every six months. This additive, which is recommended by vehicle manufacturers, helps prevent carbon buildup and will clean the engine with regular use.

