

Wheels: Wayne asks, “I have a 2002 Ford Explorer with 123,000 miles. It has the SOHC V-6 engine, runs great, and I haven’t had any major issues. It was having “hiccups” around 75,000 miles. I had it tuned up and it has been fine since. My question is, should I have the transmission drained, filter replaced and new fluid installed? Of course, the quick lube place where I take it for service wants to use their “suction system.” This has helped my son’s Neon when he has had shifting problems. Honestly, my SUV runs fine, I get 20 mpg on the highway, but I want to be pro-active. I hope to get 200,000 miles out of this vehicle before I replace it.”

Halderman: A check of Ford service information indicates that Ford does not specify a fluid change as being necessary for the life of the vehicle unless used in severe service. Severe service usually means towing a trailer or driving in mountainous areas. Under severe service, Ford recommends that the fluid be changed every 25,000 miles. Ford also specifies that only Mercon V be used if any fluid needs to be added. This is a synthetic fluid and is highly friction modified meaning that it is specifically designed for use in Ford automatic transmissions. It is normal for high-friction-modified automatic transmission fluid (ATF) to turn from a bright red to brown in normal service. Therefore, brown fluid that does not smell burned is OK and is not a reason for replacement.

