

Wheels: How can the driver of a vehicle know if the brake fluid needs to be changed?

Halderman: Newer vehicles are equipped with plastic master cylinder reservoirs that allow a person to view the brake fluid level without having to remove a cover. With the cover removed, look at the brake fluid. If it looks like coffee (either black or coffee with cream), it should be replaced. Looks cannot be the only indicator. I had a 5-year old vehicle which I purchased used and discovered brake fluid boiling while driving in the mountains of West Virginia on a hot summer day. After one or two normal stops, the brake pedal sank to the floor. I had to pump the brake pedal until I had a chance to replace the brake fluid. It required a lot of time and about two quarts of brake fluid to finally get all of the old fluid out of the system.

