

Wheels: Laura writes, “About two weeks ago my “trac off light” and my ABS systems light came on. I looked in the manual and it said to shut off the car and restart to reset the system. I did this. It continued to come on for the next two weeks, but it would come on while I was driving and then go off when I turned it off and then back on again. About a week ago, I started feeling a vibrating or grinding feeling underneath my foot, not when I was pushing the brakes, but under acceleration. The light will sometimes come on after this and sometimes it won’t. This is not a continuous problem; it only happens some days. When it is wet outside, it does not do it. Both lights come on at the same time each time they come on. I was not worried about getting it fixed until I started feeling the grinding under my foot. I want to take this and get it fixed. I wanted to know if you might have an idea what it might be. I do not want to get stuck with fixing something huge. Is this something I would need to take to a dealership or do you think a driveway mechanic could fix it? My husband thinks it is just the sensors, but I do not think it would actually make the grinding if it were just a sensor.

Halderman: On a vehicle equipped with traction control, if the drive wheels start to slip on wet pavement, the computer will pulse the brakes to restore traction. When this occurs, a thumping sound will often be heard and felt as the brakes are pulsed on and off. Because it sounds as if the traction control is being activated, there may be a fault with a wheel speed sensor, which is a common problem. There may be a simple answer – if one of the tires has low air pressure or is worn more than the others, the speed sensor on that wheel may be detecting the difference in rotating speed as a spinning tire and energize the traction control. The wheel speed sensor is built into the wheel bearing assembly and this makes for a more expensive repair. First, I would suggest that you have the vehicle diagnosed with a scan tool that can look at ABS and wheel speed sensor data and diagnostic trouble codes. This is not a job for a driveway mechanic.

