

Wheels: A letter from John says, “Last summer, I purchased a 1995 GMC 2500 Series van, with 118,000 miles on it and a 4.3-liter V-6 engine. The fast idle never worked. That is, on a cold morning, the engine RPM did not exceed idle. Gas mileage is about 11 mpg. Since the purchase, I have taken my van to two reputable places. The spark plugs, air filter, PCV valve, and gas filter were replaced at one garage. At another place, the intake gaskets were both replaced, along with an oil change and brake light switch replacement performed. I personally replaced the battery, coil and the distributor cap. I still have no fast idle on cold mornings. Can you help?”

Halderman: It is normal for fuel injected engines to operate at about the same speed both cold and warm. On older vehicles equipped with a carburetor, it was normal to have a higher idle speed when cold to achieve proper engine operation. Fuel injection provides a much more efficient control over the ignition timing and air-fuel mixtures and the fast idle when cold is no longer necessary. The idle speed is controlled by the computer through an idle control device usually called an idle air control (IAC). It is possible that this valve is not functioning correctly, but this failure usually causes an idle concern, especially when the engine is warm. A scan tool and/or an IAC tester can be used to check this concern.

