

**Wheels:** Larry sends an e-mail, "I have a 1996 Ford Explorer with about 98,000 miles on it. About 6 months ago, I started getting a "check engine" light on. I took the vehicle to two Ford dealers for their \$86 computer analysis. Results were consistent. I have a faulty catalytic converter. One wanted \$1100 and the other \$900. I took it to another shop for a third opinion, and they wanted \$450 since they have to buy an expensive converter from Ford. But they said rather emphatically, they could find nothing wrong with my "mechanical" converter; i.e. no blockage and no rattles! I have turned the light off myself several times and of course the Ford dealers both turned it off. It went off by itself a couple of times after about a week, but now stays on permanently for the last several weeks. If it is sensor(s), which are shorting, is there an easy solution? Obviously, the dealers will fix what I tell them to, but left to their own solution they'll replace everything to make sure they got it right. I would appreciate your help."

**Halderman:** I assume from your letter that the computer has set a code for a degraded catalytic converter. You can legally have it replaced with an aftermarket converter. You only have to replace the converter with a Ford original if you have less than 50,000 miles or the vehicle is less than five years old. Because you have over 50,000 miles you can use a lower cost replacement converter. Shop around. I am sure you can get a replacement less than what you have been quoted. Be sure that the rear oxygen sensor is functioning correctly. If this sensor is weak or bad, it can trigger a catalytic converter code.

