

The Preventive Maintenance Series

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Things that need double (or regular) checking:

Oil Filter Bolts: Some of the fiber washers used under the head of the oil filter bolt will crush just enough under heat cycles and vibration to cause the torque (20 ft lbs) to vanish. Almost all of the various filters in use have the problem to a certain extent. I reviewed all of my cars recently and found two of the bolts one half turn loose. One car I know of began to leak oil on the highway from that exact problem. Best defense would be to check the bolts, including the right angle adapter, on a regular basis until you are sure the torque has stabilized.

Belts: Most new belts will need to be adjusted at least once after a break in period. If you install a new belt, be sure to recheck the tension after a period of time. A brand new belt would be particularly susceptible to loosening up after high speed driving. As was mentioned above, check until you are sure the belt has stabilized. If you have belt guides, adjust the clearance to 1/16th inch.

Carburetor Inlet Nuts: These also loosen up from heat cycles and vibration, however, when you tighten the steel line nut, you should make sure that the spring action of the line is not trying to unscrew the inlet nut. Gently bend the line once you have tightened the flare nut so that the line is at least neutral and possibly even trying to tighten the nut. Gaskets, if needed, are available in an inexpensive plastic pack on O'reilly's shelf.

Gas Filler Pipe Pocket: The early model cars have a drain and a plastic insert with a rubber hose leading down the back of the wheel well. If that small hole in the bottom of the filler pocket gets plugged with debris, collected water could rise above the fuel pipe if any of the following occur: the hoses connecting the pipe to the tank have been replaced and are a little shorter, the gasket under the cap has shrunk or the vent opening may be on the low side of the cap. Late models have a bigger drain and the filler pipe is higher.

Battery Cable Ends: These should be removed from the battery about every six months and you should clean both the inside of the clamp and the battery post. They may appear clean on the outside but that is only for show – the real issue is the mating surfaces. Not attending to this item causes all electrical operations to cease, usually at the time you turn the key to start.

Oil Pan Bolts: If you have a cork or rubber pan gasket there is the potential for leaks as the gaskets experience hot and cold cycles along with vibration and oil sitting on the gasket at all times. A regular check of the bolts may be necessary. My favorite method for the pan is to use a late design pan that you have carefully straightened, a hard paper gasket (allows use of a torque wrench), high temp RTV on both sides of the gasket, use of ¼-20 grade 8 bolts by ¾ inch length with lock and flat washers. Torque to 10 ft lbs.

Fuel Pump Mounting Bolt: Check your pump simply by grabbing the top towards the front of the car and attempt to move it – any movement or clicking sound needs to be corrected by loosening the lock nut and tightening the mounting bolt, then tighten the locknut. The mounting bolt should have an "L" stamped on the head – if not, shorten the point slightly as it may try to punch through the pump casting when you tighten it properly. (See Vaircor 09/09)