

Today's Auto Repair

with Chip Stewart

-Avoiding Transmission Repair-

Even though transmission repair is expensive, last time we found that it's still a good value when put in proper perspective. But why not avoid the expensive repair to begin with? That certainly seems much more reasonable. So how do we do that? Once again, preventative maintenance (PM) is the answer. Getting your transmission serviced on a regular schedule can help you escape high repair bills. However, to be helpful, a transmission service must be performed correctly. I recently gave a servicing seminar to a group of technicians working for one of those fast lubrication and oil change centers. They asked for my help because they were creating a multitude of problems for their customers and themselves by not knowing how to properly service transmissions. There's much more to it than just a simple fluid and filter change. Other details that must be considered are band adjustments, cross leak avoidance, minor internal repairs, external leak repair, and adjustment or repair of peripheral controls. (A special note - transmission "fluid only" exchange services that are often offered at "fast lube centers" have the potential of *destroying* your transmission for a multitude of reasons. Suffice to say that if you want your fluid changed, make sure, at the very least, that the filter is renewed and the pan is cleaned out.) On later model vehicles the computer should be scanned to check for any codes that might indicate a potential failure. Also, each transmission for each vehicle will have its own idiosyncrasies and inherent deficiencies that must be addressed.

The knowledge required for all this is specific and extensive. Transmission repair professionals are specially trained for this and, as well, can offer advice on the basis of individual requirements. Transmissions are machines. All machines will eventually wear out or break. However, good preventative maintenance can prolong their use substantially.

One more thing - expect to pay a fair and reasonable price for a transmission service. A proper service can take from one and a half to several hours plus parts, fluid and fees. Beware of free or unrealistic low price offers. These are usually some form of a "bait and switch" scam used to get people in so they can be sold something they probably don't need. Remember - nobody gets something for nothing without somebody getting nothing for something. Get recommendations from friends and family or check with your local Chamber of Commerce or Better Business Bureau.

