

SPANNERMAN ANSWERS YOUR QUESTIONS

REPLACING THE TOP HOSE ON A CHEVROLET P30 CHASSIS

My motorhome on a GM P-chassis needs a new top radiator hose. I can't seem to figure out how to gain access to the hose at the point where it attaches to the radiator. Is there any technical secret to this? It almost looks like it was never planned for replacement. Can you give me some advice on how to do the job.

Changing belts and hoses on these models can be very difficult, nearly requiring a contortionist. There are only two ways to get at the area around the top of the radiator. One is by removing the engine cover inside the coach between the driver's and passenger's seat. The other is to take off the filler panel above the radiator by removing the screws that hold it; these can be accessed from under the front hood.

If the hoses are original and you found one hose is bad, the rest are probably not long for this world. I strongly recommend that you change them all, including heater hoses at the same time because a leak anywhere in the system can cause an expensive and potentially costly breakdown on the road. Many times, drivers don't notice the overheating until it's too late and the engine has been damaged. If the belts are old, change them for the same reason.

TRANSMISSION LOCKUP

I bought a new Ford diesel-powered F-250 pickup with the E40D transmission to pull my travel trailer. The truck handles the trailer with considerable ease, but I'm having a problem with the transmission/torque converter. Anytime I touch the brake to slow on hills, the torque converter unlocks as if the truck was idling while stopped in gear. In other words, I might as well shift to Neutral, because that's what occurs. The rpm drop to idle (650rpm), and the truck/trailer combo freewheels until I bring the engine up to ground speed. Then the torque converter locks up with a jerk, and the engine is reconnected to the wheels again until I again touch the brake (then the whole process takes place all over again).

I've discussed this with two dealers and no remedy has been suggested, and no one has anything to say except: "That's the way it's supposed to work."

My owners manual states: "With the word 'Off' illuminated, the transmission will operate in gears one through three. Operating in the Overdrive 'Off' mode gives more

engine braking than Overdrive and is useful for descending hills or when towing.

As it is now, I have absolutely no engine assist with slowing on any downhill grade, and that's a safety hazard. I can force a downshift in the Overdrive Off position, but that skips third gear and overrevs the engine if shifted when speed is more than 40 mph. Can you help me with this?

Yes, "That's how it's supposed to work". When the torque converter unlocks it still maintains a fluid connection between the engine and transmission, much the same as was the situation for decades prior to the use of lockup torque converters. However, as long as you don't touch the brake pedal, the converter remains locked up, and your engine is firmly connected to the drive train.

When you disengage Overdrive as you head down a hill, you should not be skipping third and going directly to second. If that's happening, your transmission has a serious problem in its controls. As long as the shifter is in Drive, the transmission should be in third gear. Using third gear is a good first step when descending a grade, and a better idea might be to use the brakes to slow to about 40mph or so then shift down to second gear for even better compression hold-back.

The best accessory you can add to improve your downhill compression braking situation is an exhaust brake, such as one of those offered by various aftermarket companies.

MOTORHOME PAYLOAD - WHAT IS IT?

I am hoping to purchase a new motor home in the very near future and am very concerned about payload. I've been comparing two Class A motorhomes. One is built on a 20,500-pound Ford chassis, and the other coach is built on a 22,000-pound Workhorse chassis. I am very impressed with the new Workhorse chassis which is powered by the 8.1-litre petrol GM engine and Allison transmission.

Unfortunately I have not been able to find either chassis in stock in the UK so have been unable to check the actual kerb weights of either. I have been told that motorhomes built on either chassis can carry about the same payload because the Workhorse chassis weighs a lot more than the Ford chassis.

I wouldn't think there would be a 1,500-pound difference in chassis weight, but I can't find out what the two chassis weigh. Can you help?

According to Workhorse the new 22,000-pound W22 chassis weighs only 330 pounds more than the 20,500 pound Ford chassis.

Since most motorhome manufacturers plan to put pretty much the same coach on either chassis, the motorhome built on the Workhorse chassis may provide up to 1,170 pounds of additional payload.

This will soon be more because Ford is coming out with its own 22,000-pound chassis that is a slightly beefed-up version of its 20,500-pound chassis. The Ford 22,000-pound chassis will undoubtedly weigh more than the 20,500-pound Ford chassis.

While there are comparison features that both Ford and Workhorse advertise, the 22,000-pound chassis choice may boil down to whether you are a Ford or GM person.

CRACKED MANIFOLDS

I have a 1972 Champion Class A with a Dodge 440-cid engine. One of the exhaust manifolds is cracked, and I'm wondering if they're still being manufactured. The engine has only around 27,000 miles on it, and I understand that this engine does suffer from this problem. Is there something I can do to avoid a repetition of this problem?

Many petrol-engined motorhomes have occasional problems with cast-iron manifolds cracking. If it happens after 27,000 miles and 27 years, I wouldn't get too concerned. Sometimes an incorrect fuel mixture or late ignition timing will cause the manifolds to run hotter than normal, which can lead to cracking.

Today's reformulated petrols are dramatically enleaning fuel mixtures in older carbureted engines. Enleanment causes higher cylinder temperatures, and cracked manifolds are often a result. Before repairing or replacing the manifold, it's a good idea to get the fuel mixture tested under load and, if needed, get the carburetor re calibrated to suit the modern range of petrols.

Often, the exhaust manifolds can be repaired by welding, using special high nickel rods. Look in the Yellow Pages under welding to find someone that specializes in cast-iron repair, as the repair procedure is rather tricky.

TECHNICAL QUESTIONS

If you have a technical question that you would like answering please send it to: SPANNERMAN, ARVM, MONTROSE, CROWN HILL, GREAT DALBY, LE14 2ER. Fax. 01664 481400 Email: apleisure@btinternet.com

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