

## THE PREVENTATIVE MAINTENANCE SERIES      Mike Dawson

This month is an attempt to help identify front end noises.

Application is for all years and models with exceptions noted.

- ◆ A creaking noise heard at low speed during turning is usually a frozen idler arm joint. By the time it creaks, it may be too late, but installing grease fittings where none exist is highly recommended.
- ◆ A quick squeak when hitting small bumps at low speed is usually a worn out pitman arm bushing. It will be accompanied by play in the steering wheel. Cars only, and replacement is the cure.
- ◆ A very sharp metallic knock when going over a bump with one wheel only is usually a missing or split outer swaybar bushing (if your car has one). If both bushings are bad, you get twice the noise. The upper bushings can also cause the problem, but not as common.
- ◆ Loose lower shock mount bolt on late model cars also makes a series of metallic knocks. You can see rusted metal powder around a loose bolt. Add washers to squeeze the A-arm against the shock when you tighten the bolt.
- ◆ Very soft thunks that can be duplicated by lightly bouncing the car can be in the shocks themselves. Long periods of storage causes this, and replacement is the only cure.
- ◆ A loud sproing (sic) when going over dips and bumps or when bouncing the car, is the spring rubbing on the inside rear of the spring tower. Caused by negative caster or springs that have settled and aggravated by bad shocks.
- ◆ Light knocking that seems worse as you encounter edges may be strut rod bushings. The lower A-arm is controlled, and shock is absorbed by the strut mounting at the crossmember. As the bushings wear out, the metal strut encounters the mounting hole. Steering also suffers.
- ◆ Clicking may be a loose hubcap center, wire cover spokes, loose front wheel bearings, an unnatural object inside the wheel cover or a nail in a tire.
- ◆ Bad A-arm bushings usually make a snapping noise when making quick low speed turns. As they get worse the noise can be heard going over bumps.

There are probably many more noises to diagnose, but these are some of the more common. A yearly check of ball joints, steering parts, suspension bushings, springs and shocks is a good way to head off trouble; noises are not normal. Preventative maintenance is preferable to repairs in most cases.