



Motor Mind

by Mitch Kudler

(NAPS)—**Dear Mitch:** Recently I started to test gas mileage on my 1998 Dodge Ram. I found that I am only getting about 15 miles per gallon—which explains why I seem to spend all of my time at the service station gassing up. Is the mileage supposed to be this low?

—Kevin C.

Answer: You want to be cool in your big truck, have a powerful V-8 engine, AND get great mileage? Fifteen mpg is as good as it gets. Count yourself lucky; a comparable truck from other manufacturers gets 13 to 14 mpg.

Dear Mitch: Should I disable my air bag? My wife is only 100 pounds and often sits in the front seat of our car.

—Ian M.

Answer: This is one of the toughest questions I get. Disabling air bags are a very personal choice and involves weighing which risks you are more comfortable with. In some cases, like a low-speed collision, your wife may fair better if the air bag is disconnected. In major accidents, though, the air bag could prevent serious injury. According to the U.S. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), air bags have saved over 2,600 lives. The NHTSA has a good brochure on their Web site (www.nhtsa.dot.gov/airbags) to help you consider the pros and cons. The same site can also provide you with a list of dealers and mechanics that install on/off switches for air bags.

Dear Mitch: I just purchased a new vehicle and my salesman wasn't able to answer all of my questions. Does my bumper-to-bumper warranty cover maintenance? Does the factory warranty cover dealer add-ons? Would suspension damage be covered by my factory warranty? What does



Master mechanic Mitch Kudler of iMotors has over 16 years of automotive repair experience.

roadside assistance cover, and is there a charge each time you use it?

—Libby B.

Answer: Generally the factory warranty doesn't cover maintenance (items such as brakes, clutches, fluid and filter changes). Dealer add-ons are usually not covered unless they are designed and made by the vehicle's manufacturer. If your off-road adventures take a wrong turn, suspension damage would not be covered by the warranty (but it might be under your insurance policy). If your roadside assistance is underwritten by one of the major players in the field, like AAA, then there should be no charge for standard breakdown help or short-distance towing.

Mitch Kudler, an operations manager at iMotors, has over 16 years of automotive repair experience and is a Certified Master Technician. Questions about car buying or repair can be e-mailed to Mitch@iMotors.com. For more information about buying a used vehicle, call toll-free 1-888-IMOTORS (1-888-466-8677) or visit www.imotors.com.

Note to Editors: This is the fourth in a series about Mitch Kudler, expert on automotive repair.