

Car Care Corner

Motor Mind

by Mitch Kudler

(NAPS)—**Dear Mitch:** I have a 1997 Ford Contour with a 2.0L Zetec engine and automatic transmission. My steering wheel vibrates excessively when I'm stopped at a light with the transmission in drive and my foot on the brake. When this happens, the tachometer shows approximately 500 rpms. I've had it into the dealer and he says he can't do anything about it. He has tried new engine mounts but they didn't help. What gives?

—Jani B.

Answer: I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but vibrating Contours are pretty common. Before you resign yourself to a life of shaking while driving, ask your mechanic to install what we call a flight recorder. Named after the black boxes made famous in airplanes, this device will record the reading on your vehicle when the vibrating happens. Your mechanic can look at the results on his diagnostic equipment. If this fails, just say the vibrating is a luxury massage feature on your Contour and watch your friends turn green with envy.

Dear Mitch: How do I find maintenance and repair records on my 1996 BMW 318i convertible that I just purchased?

—Holly A.

Answer: I assume the person you bought it from didn't have these records, so I hope you trust the seller enough to know that he or she didn't stick you with a lemon. This is always a risk when buying a vehicle from anybody but a well-respected dealer or company.



Got a car question? E-mail it to master mechanic Mitch Kudler at Mitch@iMotors.com.

My lecture aside, finding the complete records for your vehicle will be next to impossible. Try taking it to your nearest BMW dealer and through the VIN number, they should be able to tell you what work other BMW dealers have done to it. Also, run your VIN through the Carfax (www.carfax.com) or AutoCheck (www.autocheck.com) services to see if your beemer has been in any major accidents or is a salvage vehicle.

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.

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