

Summer Driving in Your Model A

We are now in the middle of summer and the weather is hot so we need to take extra precautions when driving our Model A to insure a successful journey.

One of the first things that come to mind is the cooling system. Take a few minutes and take a look under the hood. Look for leaks and be sure the fan belt has the proper tension. Check the condition of the radiator hoses and tighten all the hose clamps. Be sure there is adequate coolant in the radiator. You do not need to fill the radiator all the way to the top, as long as you can see coolant in the radiator when the engine is cold. That is sufficient. There needs to be some room for the coolant to expand when the engine comes up to operating temperature. Do not use just tap water in the radiator but run a good coolant mix. Some owners use purified water with an additive such as "Water Wetter" or "Purple Ice". Others use anti-freeze. Both are good but be sure you do not have any leaks in the head gasket if you have a babbitted bearing engine. Babbitt will degrade if it is exposed to antifreeze.

If you do not already have a temperature gauge, think about installing one. Here in Southern California, we need to be more vigilant as far as engine temperature is concerned. I like the mechanical gauges with an easy to read 270 degree sweep dial. When driving, 160-180 degrees is considered to be a good operating temperature. Anything above 190 degrees is considered to be in the danger range.

A good quality "Leakless Water Pump" is also recommended. A leakless water pump will not cause the engine to run cooler but will help prevent coolant loss and the owner does not have to add coolant to the radiator as often. Another item to consider is a fan shroud. Most 1928 Model A's came from the factory with a fan shroud but were discontinued toward the end of the year. Some parts suppliers offer a replacement shroud for both the 28-29 cars and the 30-31's. A shroud will help the fan pull air thru the whole radiator core and not just the part that is immediately in front of the fan.

If the cooling system is clean, the head gasket is sealed well, there is no excessive rust in the water passages of the engine and your Model A still wants to always run hot, you may need to replace the radiator or re-core the radiator you have. An older radiator may appear to be good but over time some radiators will degrade and will not transfer heat from the tubes to the fins where heat is removed by the air that is passing thru the radiator. If you are going to re-core or replace your radiator, consider opting for a heavy duty core. The original factory installed radiator was adequate for a stock engine in most climates but as we upgrade our

engines and do highway or mountain driving in the summer months, the design of the original radiator is marginal at best.

Another problem that can occur in hot weather is vapor lock. Today, the fuel that is available to us has ethanol or alcohol added to it and in very hot weather, it is prone to boiling and turning to vapor. This usually occurs with slow speed stop and go driving such as a parade or when running for a while at highway speeds and then coming to a stop. When this happens, the engine will not want to keep running and often will just quit. The immediate cure for this is to cool down the carburetor. A spray bottle of water may come in handy when touring or participating in a parade during the hot summer months. Another way of dealing with the poor fuel that is available to us is to add about a cup of Diesel Fuel or Kerosene to every 10 gal. of pump gas. This will raise the boiling point enough to prevent vapor lock. Diesel fuel and kerosene both have some lubrication qualities which is helpful to our old engines.

Tech Tip

During hot weather when driving at highway speeds or ascending a hill and the engine temperature of your Model A climbs above 190 degrees and into the danger zone, you need to take action to prevent overheating. First, you should ease up on the throttle a little. Usually this is enough to bring the engine temperature under control. Other things you may find will help is to richen the fuel mixture by turning the choke rod 1/4 turn counter clockwise. A slightly richer mixture will help lower coolant temperature. When the engine is working hard, retarding the spark just a little can be beneficial. Slightly less spark advance can help prevent detonation and also can reduce engine temperature a few degrees. But use caution, retarding the spark too much will reduce power and can overheat the exhaust manifold and the rest of the exhaust system.



Leakless Water Pump



Mechanical Water Temperature gauge



Chemical Additives for your Radiator Coolant