

HYBRID HYPERTENSION

The website www.CNNMoney.com published a list of answers to the seven most troubling questions asked by current or potential owners of hybrid cars. Among these were:

Q. Do hybrids have complicated technology that is difficult and expensive to fix?

A. *Every car today has complicated technology and most hybrid vehicles have extremely long warranties, so cost shouldn't be an issue.*

Q. Isn't it true that hybrids have limited battery life?

A. *Unlike cell phone or laptop batteries, hybrid batteries go through their entire functional lives without ever being fully charged or discharged. Hybrid vehicles have a gasoline powered engine assisted by an electric motor. The battery for the motor is charged by the gas engine during breaking and idling. Both Toyota and Ford claim to have hybrid vehicles in fleet use that have lasted over 160,000 kilometres and manufacturers guarantee all hybrid-specific components for between eight and ten years and 160,000 kilometres.*

Q. Haven't hybrids had technical problems like stalling, which have caused recalls?

A. *The concern stems from a Toyota Prius recall last year because the cars were shutting off the gasoline engines at the wrong time, sometimes on the highway. New software has corrected the problem. The authors add, "Not a real concern – non-hybrid cars get recalled too."*

Q. Will hybrids pay for themselves to justify their premium costs?

A. *According to most analyses "it would be difficult to justify purchasing a hybrid for economic reasons alone." The authors conclude that even if all costs are factored in, savings for hybrid owners would only click in after five years and at that point would still be about \$80 a year. They add, "You could save more by simply accelerating and braking more gently in your current vehicles."*

Q. Do hybrids offer inferior driving performance?

A. *"You won't blow anyone's doors off, but you also won't waste quite as much of your life pumping gas."*

Q. Is it true that hybrids will not hold resale value?

A. *This is "a genuine cause of concern." Most hybrid vehicles are versions of ordinary, non-hybrid vehicles with little to visually distinguish them. "Don't be fooled by stories about used Toyota*

Priuses selling for near new prices."

Q. I've heard that hybrids do not get the level of mileage that is promised.

A. *"If you are calculating how much you will save on gas by looking at (government) estimates, you are probably over-estimating by a wide margin." Assume that your hybrid "won't get the mileage promised." Whether that's a concern, is up to you.*

"You could save more by simply accelerating and braking more gently in your current vehicles."