

Look, Listen, Feel...

Inspection Procedures for Automatic Belt Tensioners

Look:

When inspecting a belt tensioner you must look at it with the engine running as well as with the engine stopped. Below is a list of things to look for. They are all warning signs that the tensioner may be worn out and that it may be time to replace it before you get stranded.

Engine running at idle:

- Look for excessive tensioner movement
- Look for pulley wobble
- Look for belt misalignment on the pulley

Engine shut off:

- Look at the pulley, is the belt running near the center?
- Does the tensioner appear to be tilted off to one side?
- Look for excessive corrosion on the pulley.
- Look for red rust colored dust coming out of the front of the tensioner.
- Look for damaged bearing seal or grease leaking out of the pulley bearing.

Listen:

With the engine running:

- Listen for any abnormal noises (belt squeaks/ buzz or whining noises) coming from the belt drive. These noises often will increase when the engine rpm is increased, the A/C compressor engages or power steering load increases.

With the engine stopped:

- Remove the belt and spin the tensioner pulley by hand, listen carefully for any noises. This is a great time to inspect and rotate all the pulleys in the belt drive system. Idlers, water pump, power steering, air conditioning and alternator should all spin freely without noise.

Feel:

With the engine shut off and the serpentine belt removed:

- Use correct tool to rotate the tensioner throughout its entire range. If tensioner does not feel smooth, feels seized or is notchy, then it may be time to replace it.
- Feel the pulley with a gentle up and down rocking motion. If excessive play is noted, pulley may need to be replaced.

Time Saver: When inspecting tensioners, always inspect the belt and replace as necessary.