Drips & Sparks

If you have any questions or problems with your LBC, send an e-mail to Randall Young at: HelpDesk@sctoa.org

My local mechanic recommends running pure antifreeze in any and all cars. Not only does he believes running 50/50 is a gimmick that leads to a need to more quickly change coolant, but he believes it causes so harm to the engine.

Pure antifreeze is a lousy coolant, and in fact freezes at a much higher temperature than a 50/50 mix. So it won't harm the engine directly, but may well allow it to freeze or boil over.

In any case, I've got a ton of anti-freeze which I haven't yet done anything with. Should I use a mixture, or how do you proceed with prepping these cars for spring/summer driving?

Assuming this is standard full-strength ethylene glycol (not "premix" or "extended life" or "non-toxic" antifreeze), unless you need more freeze protection, I'd suggest 30% AF and 70% purified ("distilled") water. That mix will provide complete freeze protection down to 0F, obviously if you live in a more northern clime you need a stronger solution. 30% is the minimum recommended concentration for corrosion protection, so run that much even if (like me) you live where it never freezes.

Standard coolant should be changed every two years, whether or not you drive the car. The corrosion inhibitors wear out with time even with the engine not running. Another option is adding more corrosion inhibitor (like No-Rosion brand), but the coolant still has to be periodically changed and No-Rosion is more expensive than anti-freeze (around here anyway).

I don't recommend "Extended life" coolant for Little British Cars.

BTW, pure antifreeze is flammable.

One other factoid, ethylene glycol is poisonous to pets, particularly cats. (It's actually poisonous to all mammals including humans, but cats are especially sensitive.) Lots of people claim dogs and cats are attracted to the stuff, but mine never showed any particular interest on the rare occasions when both were in the same area. If you do spill some on the ground or street, be sure to promptly flush (dilute) it with lots of water from your hose. As little as a teaspoonful of pure antifreeze can kill a housecat, and just a few tablespoons can kill a small dog. It will biodegrade in a few weeks, so the goal is to dilute it enough that no animal can drink enough to be harmful in that length of time.

Some areas forbid engine coolant in sanitary drains, but most allow private individuals to dispose of small amounts into municipal sanitary drains. I always follow it with plenty of fresh water.

Never pour it into a septic system, or a storm drain.