



MIKES CORVETTE CORNER

Freshen up that Corvette

Depending on where you live, your car's HVAC system might see use every day of the year, just in the summer, only in the winter, or somewhere in between. But regardless of how often you use the heat or air conditioning in your car, there's nothing quite like cranking the thermostat one way or the other, and getting hit in the face with a blast of disgusting car smells.

Whether your heater or A/C smells sickly sweet, simply stale, acrid like burning rubber, or distinctly urine-tinged, all of these different gross car heater smells can be associated with a specific problem, which means each also has its own specific fix.

So while there is no silver bullet to take out every single bad car smell, taking one last whiff can help you identify and fix the problem. With that in mind, here are a few most common bad car HVAC smells and what you can do about them.

Odor number one: Maple Syrup

Alternate description: Sweet

The likely culprit: Leaking heater core

Alternate culprit: Someone eating Krispy Kreme in the passenger seat of your Corvette.

One of the most common bad car smells you can get out of an HVAC system isn't always unpleasant. Some people actually describe it as smelling like syrup in general, while others say it's more sickly sweet, or even a mix of bitter and sweet.

It's also fairly common to find this specific smell unpleasant, despite some people describing it as similar to maple syrup. If you've ever had the misfortune to taste anti-freeze, the strong scent memory associated with that taste may explain why you dislike this particular smell.

The reasoning there is that when you smell something sweet from your dash vents, the usual culprit is a leaking heater core. Antifreeze smells sweet, and when it leaks into the heater box, that smell will get propagated throughout your car.

If you're unlucky, you may also notice your windows fog up in association with this problem. The reason that's unlucky is that antifreeze creates a gross film on the windshield that can be tough to clean off.

With the new coolants on the market, some of these odors may not be present or smell totally different.

The fix:

If your heater core is leaking, the only real fix is to replace it. If that isn't an option, due to how expensive the repair can be, bypassing the heater core and using an electric car heater, or another car

heater alternative, is a stopgap measure that may work. But, most of us drive our cars in great weather. And if that heater core is leaking, take care of it ASAP because if it opens up in the EVAP housing and on to the interior, it can be a costly clean up. And if it saturates the carpeting and the sound insulation, chances are you'll be replacing it.

Odor number two:

Mildew

Alternate description: musty, stale

The likely culprit: Water collecting in the heater box

Alternate culprit: Your car is leaking somewhere else (i.e. windshield, body plug, etc)

The second most common bad car heater smell is caused by mildew that can grow when the heater box remains damp instead of drying out.

Heater boxes are typically designed with drainage pipes, which allows condensation to drip out. If you've ever noticed a puddle of clean water under your car, particularly with the air conditioning running, it probably dripped out of the heater box.

Whenever something prevents the heater box from draining properly, water can collect in it, and you can end up with a moldy, musty, mildewy smell. Typically, removing the blockage will fix the problem. However, other corrective actions may be required to purge the smell. And if water is getting into the car via some

other means, then you could be dealing with a totally different mold or mildew problem.

The fix: Unplug the heater box drain or fix the leak, allow everything to dry, and hope for the best. If the smell doesn't go away, you may have to take additional measures to get rid of residual mildew.

Odor three: Non-plastic Burning Smell

Alternate description: hot, burning rubber, acrid

The likely culprit: Blower motor

Alternate culprit: blower resistor, other electronics, burning oil, clutch or brakes.

When you get a burning plastic or rubber smell out of your vents only after turning on the heater, with the blower on, it's usually going to be related to a component like a blower motor, resistor, or some other related electronic component getting hot.

There are a lot of other things that can cause a similar smell, though, and not all of them have to do with your car heater. For instance, burning smells from oil hitting the exhaust manifold, or from stuck brakes or a slipping clutch can all get inside your car via the fresh air intake.

If you notice that a smell doesn't show up with the HVAC on recirculate, but it shows up when you turn on the fresh air intake, then it's probably coming from

outside the vehicle.

Some of the most common causes of burning smells in and around a car include:

Overheated brakes or clutch -

Burning oil-

Melted or burnt vacuum line or hose-

The fix: Locate the component that's getting hot or failing and replace it.

However with the advent of the cabin filter, some of these odors may not be present or may even be masked. So, pay attention to fluid levels and possible leaks.

Regards....

Mike

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