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HOURS

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Your Car's Computer

by Adrienne Akinsete 5-18-08

Most of us have become acquainted with the computers in our homes and work place, but you may be surprised to know that a computer determines how much fuel is needed to create the spark that sets your car into motion. Similar to your desktop computer, your car's computer relies on the information it is given, in order to return accurate output. That's why today's drivability and no-start diagnosis begins with you describing the problem you're having followed by a thorough check of the mechanical condition of your car. Your description of the problem helps the technician to focus in on the parts that may be faulty. In short, faulty mechanical parts affect the sensors that your car's computer relies on in order to determine how much fuel is needed.

Once the mechanical problems are eliminated, computer diagnostic can begin in order to determine if any of the sensors that your car's computer relies on are working within parameters. Your cars computer will adjust the amount of fuel being injected to the engine cylinders based the information it gets from the various sensors. A malfunctioning sensor can cause the computer to richen up, that means add more fuel, or to run lean, that means to minimize the fuel. Both too rich and too lean can contribute to bad fuel economy and drivability problems.

Much like your home computer, your car's computer tries to warn you when things are going bad. The check engine light is one such indication. In addition, excessive smoke, poor acceleration, unusual noises, strange smells and difficulty starting are all signs that you should take seriously.