

If you rented a car from the airport, would you expect to find factory parts being used for repairs, or what has been termed "after market" parts? Some may ask what is the difference and why would it matter?

The manufacturers of automobiles produce spare parts for a regulated time span even after the car model is no longer being produced. This is done to insure that the car can be safely repaired for many years. As cars age, are involved in accidents and are scrapped, the demand for many of these parts diminishes over time. As the demand for parts decrease, the production quantities also drop. As the production quantity drops, the price usually goes up.

The increase in price for smaller quantity items is the result of sharing the setup costs over a smaller amount of parts. With the increase of prices some people seek alternative ways to repair their cars for less.

In comes the after market parts producer. This manufacturer sees a potential market place and believes that they can produce an equivalent part to keep your car going. If they see a large enough demand and they believe they can make it for a price people will pay, they will produce the part for you.

Typically this manufacturer will copy to the best of their ability, a known good part from the original manufacturer. Sometimes they will reverse engineer the part. With either process come many omissions. Since they have no relationship to the original manufacturer they have no knowledge of the history of the part.

With the history for a given part comes the knowledge of all the variations that didn't work. One way that after market parts producers are able to produce a lower priced part, is by employing a different method to manufacture it. Many times the alternative method although it produces a lower cost part, produces an inferior quality and uses an original manufacturer rejected method.

Substitutions Not Allowed

Many people unknowingly replace parts in their personal autos with inferior quality parts. Some people knowingly accept lower quality based simply on cost. Some accept these parts on a temporary basis until they are able to get a new car.

Some people base their decision on an urban legend that usually begins with the following statement; "Mr. Smith used to work for the XYZ Company and now he has started his own company." Although Mr. Smith did in fact work for the XYZ Company, it is unlikely that he actually designed the part, purchased or decided the specific materials for the part and he probably did not machine the part. It is likely that Mr. Smith only sold the part and had some basic information about it. It is even more likely that the only knowledge that Mr. Smith has about this part is that he has a better than 50% chance of picking it out of a parts lineup.

Whatever the reason people justify the use of these parts, this decision only affects themselves and their families. When a rental car agency makes use of this style part the effect may be more widespread.

For several reasons many companies have made a commitment to only use OEM (Original Equipment Manufacture) parts in their equipment. Companies are removing from some of their personnel the ability to make a decision that affects their company liability. If an individual within a given company decides to purchase after market parts, they do in fact affect their company's liability and risk exposure.

Companies committed to providing the highest level of quality to their customers have partnered with select manufacturers, also known as approved vendors, for many reasons.

Approved Vendors have:

1. A proven track record of quality and consistency.
2. A commitment to stand behind their products.
3. A history that shows that they are committed to doing business for a long time and will still be here next year.
4. They possess the fullest knowledge of the parts they supply and their relationships to other parts being used in the product.

For these reasons and more, companies are increasingly demanding that the "No Substitutions Allowed" policy be strictly adhered to.

Substitutions can be Unpredictable

Some shops have found that when they decide to install substitute parts they can't always predict the result. Don't overlook one of the first steps of troubleshooting; make sure that the right parts are being used.

Since I troubleshoot with mechanics over the phone, one of my first steps is to identify the product. There are many clues and signs to help identify the product and the parts being used.

On occasion certain electrical problems have been isolated down to a substitute part. Electrical coils inside of contactors have been found with the wrong voltage listed on them. Electric motors have been found to be rewound.

Substitute parts can present the mechanic with problems not normally found. These problems tend to mimic other problems and make them more difficult to find. These scenarios increase labor times and difficulty in troubleshooting.

Let it be said again, "Although imitation may be the sincerest form of flattery, it is no guarantee of quality."

Did You Know?

- Substitutions are not the best value available.
- Power Climber does not endorse substitute parts being used in their products.
- Power Climber has a history of 35 years.
- Power Climber does not assign one person the task of design, specification, purchase and production of any individual part. In keeping with modern manufacturing procedures parts are produced through team effort with rules that guarantee the highest levels of quality.
- Power Climber has one department tasked with insuring the highest quality level on parts. Power Climber has a whole team devoted to providing our customers with the highest level of quality customer service.

Tips and Tricks

- Post your company's "No Substitutions Allowed" sign in the lobby behind your order desk. This will spark conversations with your customers where you can proudly explain your commitment to quality and their safety.

For questions or comments, contact Customer Service at 1-800-560-CLIMB (2546) or customerservice@safeworks.com.