

Everything You Should Know About Timing Belts

After reading Charlie Rockwell's piece in the April '83 Stress Cracks, it appears that some good information is needed to calm everyone's nerves (if you are a 907 owner).

Toothed timing belts, as used on the 907 engine in the Elite II, Eclat, Esprit, and Jensen Healey, do not break often, if at all, especially if they are properly maintained:

1. Lotus Cars recommends replacing the belt every 25,000 miles-or sooner if inspection reveals a need. There are no exceptions to this regular maintenance item, except an owners future headaches.\$\$\$\$\$

2. There is a very important specification in your shop manual for the timing belt tension. Adhere to it! If the belt is too tight, it wears rapidly and may fail prematurely. If the belt runs too loose, it may jump the teeth on any of the sprockets it rides on. Lotus uses a tool called a "Burroughs Gauge" to measure the belt tension. Any of the authorized dealers have this tool for their use, as well as many independant specialists shops. Anyone who attempts the adjusting of the belt tension without one of these tools should definitely have the adjustment checked at the earliest convenience. Much cheaper than new valves.

3. The "timing belt cover" is not necessary for the safety of the timing belt. It is there to keep your fingers on your hands. On the front-engined cars it also serves to deflect any road debris that might get thrown into the belt. The Esprit does not have a cover on the belt, as it is much tougher for you to put your fingers into a nasty spot, and the engine is much more protected from the road.

Additionally, I would recommend that owners always inspect the belt tensioner assembly while the belt is being changed. The bearing(s) in particular do a lot of work. Also keep in mind that the belts were not made to operate in an oil bath, so fix any oil leaks at the front of the engine.

Remember, Lotus had a reason to specify routine replacement and attention to the timing belt. Properly cared for, the belt does not age to the point of breakage, nor does it cause a need for your constant worrying about where it might strand an owner next.

Keith Work