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Machines that are used regularly suffer wear and tear. Same holds true for the alternator. If you drive your vehicle regularly then you need to inspect your vehicle's internal parts on a regular basis. This way you can avoid serious problems like your vehicle stopping in the middle of the road. If you are aware of alternator problems then you will know when it is time to repair or replace it. Finding a problem in vehicle is similar to a doctor finding an illness in a patient. First you need to identify the symptoms. These symptoms will tell you if the problem is with the alternator or with any other component.

Some of the alternator problems can be identified by simply observing the unit closely, while other problems can be diagnosed only by using special tools and equipments. In some cases, it may require opening the alternator. Generally, there is some abnormal noise, malfunctioning of electrical components, or drop in battery charge that indicates a problem with the alternator. If you notice any such issue then immediately try to find the fault. If the alternator problem is not rectified in time then it can damage other auto parts that are working well.

Following are some of the common alternator problems:

Worn out Belts

This is one of the easiest to identify. The belt looks worn out and it slips. It may also turn loose, affecting the performance of alternator. If the alternator is not running at the standard speed then it will not provide the right voltage. If proper voltage is not available then the battery will run out of charge.

Abnormal Sound

Some alternator problems can be identified by carefully listening when the engine is running. If within the alternator, the rotor is falling then a grinding noise can be heard. This indicates a faulty alternator. In some cases, it may require complete replacement of the alternator.

Improper voltage

This can be checked only after disconnecting the battery connection. You will also need a voltmeter to check if the alternator is producing the right voltage while running. Voltage also fluctuates depending on the acceleration and RPM. An alternator producing more than the required power can lead to battery overcharging problem. Similarly, low power generation can result in undercharging of the battery.

Bearings

If you hear unusual cracking noises then it is possible that the alternator bearings are worn out and need replacement. The noise may also indicate something loose inside the alternator body.

Diodes

The alternator actually produces AC current but the car battery and vehicle's electrical components run on DC current. Diodes are used to change the AC current into DC current. The alternator will not provide optimum power if the diodes are not functioning properly.

Internal Components Not Functioning

An alternator has many internal components like cooling fan, rotor, diode rectifier, voltage regulator, brushes, coil winding, rotor, stator, and terminals. If something is not working properly then it will result in poor power production.

By identifying these alternator problems, you can easily diagnose the unit. Sometimes, the problem is with the other components that are directly or indirectly connected to the alternator.

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