

A Clean Engine Compartment For The Doctor

by Dr. Detail

There have been times when my kids, or other close acquaintances, have actually suggested that I need to find something useful to do instead of spending so much time cleaning and driving my Miata. I don't understand what they mean, since I just supposed that everybody cleans the engine compartment of their car.

The original owner of my car had decided to have the car Ziebarted, which wouldn't have been a big deal, but as a result of the rustproofing, the engine compartment have a substantial coating of what can charitably be described as a brown goo that was essentially everywhere. Even though I was one of the few people who ever saw it, it slowly got on my nerves enough that I decided to do something about it. I read posts on the Miata forum and at Miata.net and saw that there were several ways to approach this job, so I thought I would share them with you and then tell you what I did. The important thing to remember is that once the compartment is clean, keeping it clean is actually pretty simple.

The easiest way to get the engine compartment clean is to take it somewhere that specializes in steam cleaning car engines. If your compartment is really the pits as a result of your extensive off-road driving, this might be a good way to go. It certainly is a good way to avoid a big mess and colorful phrases.

The second way is to take it to the coin-op car wash and use the degrease setting on the hose, along with a good engine degreaser. This approach makes me fairly nervous, since you have to be pretty careful about not getting water in the spark plug holes. In addition, I'm sure that whatever is used as a solvent at the car wash would also be pretty hard on your paint if you weren't really careful.

The approach I took ended up being pretty simple and only took about half an hour. If you're into DIY, you will need the following:

- 1) A good engine degreaser, which you can buy at any parts store.
- 2) A roll of those blue paper shop towels, again, buy at the parts store
- 3) A couple of sponges that you won't mind throwing away
- 4) Possibly a tapered brush of some kind for those really tight places
- 5) A bunch of cloth towels to spread over the fenders while you're working
- 6) The garden hose
- 7) Possibly a pair of rubber gloves to protect your hands

Get the job started by taking a break. Make sure that engine is lukewarm to the touch or cooler. Pop open the hood and then spread your towels over the fenders in case you slop some of the degreaser where it shouldn't go. I started by lightly applying the degreaser to the underside of the hood and then letting it set for a few minutes. You don't want it to dry, but you should let it work for a minute or so. Take a clump (technical term) of your blue shop towels and wipe the degreaser off and throw the paper towels away. Continue this process throughout the engine compartment until you have the whole engine clean. Use the brush for tight places or just reapply some degreaser and wait a little longer. You can also use the sponges for stubborn spots. After you have the whole compartment clean, cover the distributor and the spark plugs and wires with some towels and then gently rinse that compartment out with the hose and then dry it with some towels or just drive the car around for a few minutes.

After this is done, you can put a quick coat of Nu-Finish or some other wax on the underside of the hood and firewall. This will keep it looking pretty nice. After all this is done, just wipe the underside of the hood, etc. every other car wash or so and it will stay pretty nice looking.

Until next time, remember that there may be more useful things to do than cleaning and driving your Miata, but we know that hardly any of them are as much fun.

For Ladies Only

Ladies, have you ever heard your guy talking that foreign language that it seems only those who have a Y chromosome can understand? Would you like to learn more about that language? Have you ever wondered what a cam shaft, rear differential, or an exhaust manifold is?

Here's your chance: a LADIES ONLY tech session at AIM on June 29th. This will be part of the AIM Open House (See page 3). We will have an open question and answer session to answer any questions you may have about what is going on under the hood of your baby. Learn how to check your fluids (clutch, radiator, brake, and windshield washer), change your tire (and where all the parts to do so are found in your car), how to change your oil, and anything else you want to learn more about.

This will be a great opportunity for you not only to learn "how" and "where", but also the "whys" of things that are done to and for your car. Come with lots of questions . . . and just for this session, no guys allowed!! (We may even get Shane to wear a skirt, hairspray, and makeup!)

**THE NIGHTMARE
CONTINUES**

It's the Fussin' 'n Cussin' IX on July 20th.

We'll get started with an optional country style breakfast... then run the "the challenging" clue hunt rally and end up at the newly remodeled Mayberry Cafe for more great home cooking!

Look for more information in the July Open Road and start practicing your 'fussin and cussin'!