

Blast from the Past: Canister Oil Filters Have Returned and with Them Comes an Increased Risk for Errors

by Emily Schmitt



Over the years, oil changes have become more complex. One reason for the added complexity is the increase in the use of canister filters.

That's right, canister filters. The same ones that were replaced by spin-on filters in the 1970s have returned. If not properly installed and checked, using canister filters can result in potential issues like leaks on a customer's driveway or catastrophic engine damage.

Eric Frankenberger, president and chief operations officer at Oil Changers, which has 34 locations throughout California, said the issue is simple.

There are a lot of different kinds of canister filters. This means you have to carefully inspect each canister filter to ensure you are using the right one and are installing it correctly. The outcome of which, Frankenberger said, can depend upon how much experience the technician has.

"The advanced technician, someone who's been doing this for a long time, can generally do this with very little problems," Frankenberger said. "This is because they tend to know how to use their resources and how to properly pressure-check these vehicles. Newer or inexperienced technicians can miss some very simple steps that could significantly increase the risk of a mistake happening."

Frankenberger pointed to the example of the 2014 Jeep, Dodge and Chrysler models, which have been some of the most recent potential areas of concern. Many of the 2014 models use different canister filters than their 2013 counterparts. The

2014 filters have a plunger on the top, and the 2013 filters don't. If you were to replace the 2014 model's filter with a 2013 filter (which looks exactly the same, except for the plunger), the engine could seize in a matter of minutes.

"These engines can cost around \$14,000 for this simple mistake," Frankenberger said.

Fortunately, there are steps you can follow to make sure every canister filter replacement is a success. Oil Changers has created a checklist technicians can use to avoid canister filter issues. Here are the five steps listed on that checklist:

1. Note the correct area the gasket should be seated in. Both the hood tech and pit tech need to get visual confirmation of the correct location before re-installation.
2. Use a generous amount of new oil on the gasket(s) prior to and after installing on canister. The gasket should be saturated and no dry spots should be visible.
3. Use a generous amount of new oil on the canister housing at the point of gasket contact. It's good to wipe out the housing with a rag, but you must reapply oil prior to installing the canister.
4. Don't use any inside housing bolts to tighten down canisters. Use the approved caps for removing canisters. Tighten down canister filters to approved manufacturer torque specifications.
5. During the pressure check, and after standard oil pressure is confirmed, the

hood tech should have the vehicle's engine brought to 3,000 RPM (2,000 RPM for diesel) for approximately 10 seconds. The hood tech/pit tech must get a visual inspection of the filter and look for leaks or a gasket that has protruded. The vehicle should run for a minimum of 45 seconds while in the shop.

These guidelines can help you perform oil changes on canister filters without error. Still, mistakes can happen, and Frankenberger said the best thing to do in this situation is to be honest with the customer and correct the mistake.

"The key is not to make a mistake, but if they happen, stand behind your quality and the product you're providing," Frankenberger said.

Quick lube owners, managers and technicians can turn to Automotive Oil Change Association (AOCA) Talk for help. AOCA Talk is an email-based Q&A system available to AOCA members. Frankenberger, who has been an AOCA member for nearly 20 years, said he and his staff often turn to AOCA Talk to ask questions and share resources with the AOCA community.

"Our CEO, Larry Read, was one of the founding members of AOCA, and we take great pride in doing everything we can to help our oil-changing family," Frankenberger said.

Although the return of canister oil filters has caused problems of the past to resurface, there are tools and resources available to help you continue to provide high-quality oil changes. ♦

EMILY SCHMITT is editor at the Automotive Oil Change Association. For more information on membership in AOCA, call 800.230.0702 or visit: www.aoca.org

