

What are 'organic' brake pads?

BY TOM AND RAY MAGLIOZZI

Dear Tom and Ray:

What are organic brake pads? A chain shop recommended them, because my current metallic pads have been de-squeaked twice but are still squeaking badly. I said I wanted ceramic pads, but they said to go with "organic" pads. What are they? Are they safe? Do they squeak less? -- Travis

RAY: They sound so great, don't they? "Organic pads." It conjures up images of brake pads made of watermelon rinds and stalks of rhubarb.

TOM: Well, that'd be a better use for rhubarb!

RAY: But in brake-speak, organic means "made of asbestos." It's the old style brake pads that worked perfectly well to stop your car, but have

fallen out of favor because they were also causing lung cancer in factory workers and auto mechanics.

TOM: We never use asbestos pads anymore. We use semi-metallic pads, which are made of iron, bronze, copper, steel wool and other stuff that just hasn't been SHOWN to cause cancer yet.

RAY: Or we use ceramic pads, which are made of broken

teacups or something. And the reason we've been using more ceramic pads lately is that (1) they've come way down in price and (2) they produce a lot less brake dust. Some customers with fancy alloy wheels objected to having metallic black brake dust pitting their \$1,000 wheels.

TOM: But I don't think your squealing problem is related to the composition of your brake pads. I think the problem is missing hardware.

RAY: And the way to get that hardware is to buy a set of pads from the manufacturer.



Click & Clack

When you buy the brake pads from the dealer's parts department (whether you have them installed there or not), you get

all the shims, springs, clips and other hardware that's designed to keep them from, what? Squealing!

TOM: So that would be my recommendation, Travis. Spring for a set of factory pads. You can even ask the chain guys to get them and install them for you if you want to keep working with them. But even if you have non-factory rotors, a set of factory pads should make the squealing go away.

Got a question about cars? Write to Click and Clack in care of this newspaper, or e-mail them by visiting the Car Talk Web site at www.cartalk.com.

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