

Unexplained Stalling in Traffic – Camshaft Position Sensor (CPS)

Once in a while, I get an email out of the blue asking my advice about some automotive problem like I'm some huge Miata automotive expert. ☺ No, I'm not a huge expert, but I'm a good researcher. Here's a really interesting case in point that turned out with a weird but happy ending:

Recently, a non-member contacted me after seeing my name on our website (not sure of that's a good thing or not!). He said his older Miata had a habit of stalling in traffic for no reason or while actually zoom-zooming down the road (yikes) and he wondered if I had any ideas. The usual suspects, fuel pump, electrical problems, etc. came to mind, but upon looking into this further, I noticed a number of Miata enthusiasts had encountered this problem. After being diagnosed by computer code it turned out to be the *camshaft position sensor* (CPS), a handy-dandy little \$100 plastic part that performs the same function as the distributor used to in older cars. Geez, remember those little black round things back in the Dark Ages? (I say Dark Ages for those of us who owned Triumphs with Lucas electricals). The CPS works as a collaborative effort with the *crankshaft sensor* and the *powertrain control module* (the engine computer brain) to eliminate the variances in ignition timing prevalent in the old distributor-controlled ignition engine.

So after I gave this guy my list of solutions including the CPS for him to try, yesterday I received an unsolicited email from one of our Rochester Club members who had this very same problem recently and after some diagnostics, it turned out to be the same faulty part – the notorious camshaft position sensor! What a coincidence, eh? This very nice person took the time to alert me so that I could add this information to my column. So, if you are experiencing this intermittent problem and, by the way, your *check engine light* may also be glowing red, this may possibly be the solution. It's a fairly easy fix that doesn't take long.

So thanks for the tip, Fellow MMC Member. I appreciate the feedback of your experience to pass on to everyone.