

DOC'S BLOCKS
AUTOMOTIVE AIR CONDITIONING REPAIR

Question:

When topping off a system, should oil be added to the system?

Answer:

Many technicians automatically added an ounce or two of oil whenever refrigerant was added to a system. Because of the systems that were in use at that time, there was not likely a problem.

To add oil as being a part of a service could cause more problems than desired. On R-134a systems from the factory, came with PAG oil in them. After the vehicle is old enough for parts to wear out, there is the possibility that there is a different oil in the system.

R-12 systems, being on their way out, could have one of three different oils in the system. Pag and Ester oils don't mix with mineral oil. If synthetic oil is added to mineral oil, the mineral oil no longer circulates and the synthetic must do all the lubrication. If only a small amount of oil was added, the compressor will seize up from lack of lubrication.

If it is unknown which oil is in the system, remove as much oil as possible from the system and install a full charge of oil as required for the system.

If there is a label stating the type oil in the system, or the system is has never had parts replaced and retrofitted, a small amount of oil can be added. It must be the same oil as is in the system.