

SAVVA Technical Tip 151 – Alternators

Last month we discussed the “ins” and “outs” of changing a cars system from 6 volt vehicles to 12 volts. Firstly, take into consideration your older car may be positive to earth. You would be well advised to change to negative to earth. If you go the alternator route you will have no choice but to go negative to earth.

There are a few plus points when changing to 12 volts, for example, one can increase the wattage of headlights and taillight bulbs for safer night driving. Most older 6 volt generators have limited output and jf you fitted high wattage bulbs you could run the battery down.

The next question is – a generator or an alternator. From a reliability and a functional point of view the alternator is way ahead of the generator. The only reason to fit a generator will be from a visible/cosmetic point of view. If you are well heeled you can always import an alternator that looks like a generator. But these don't come cheap. You could be looking at a good US \$500.00 plus postage for a 45 amp unit.

If you fit an alternator try and made it look as much like a generator as possible by fitting a broad pulley and painting it black.

Buy the smallest one you can find. Even a compact 45 amp should produce all the current you will need. They are small and can be camouflaged a lot easier. Don't use an early alternator with an external regulator, use a modern one with a built in regulator.

The main advantage of the alternator is that it will automatically regulate the charging rate and dispense with troublesome regulators and cut-outs. You can just leave the regular or cut-out on the firewall for appearances sake.

Next chat we'll discuss fitting an alternator.