

## Dealer Warranty Issues

One major concern for new vehicle owners is whether or not installing aftermarket performance products will void their OEM warranty. The general rule is that... "in order for a warranty to be in jeopardy, the items installed must actually pose a clear threat to systems on the vehicle, or have done actual damage to it" (Paul Barry, Manager of Warranty Programs at Ford Motor Company). Unfortunately, some dealers will look for any excuse to void a warranty because it saves them money and brings in more profits. They count on consumer ignorance regarding warranty law to pressure their customers into either buying parts from them, or not installing performance items at all. If you are having a problem with warranty issues, or are concerned about potential problems, here is a list of things you can do to protect yourself and keep your warranty in place.

1. **Voiding warranties can violate the law.** The Magnuson-Moss Warranty Act passed by Congress states that a manufacturer may not require the use of any brand of after market accessory unless the manufacturer provides the item free of charge. So if, for example, your dealer tells you that installing a K&N Filter will void the warranty, he must provide filters free of charge. If he does not, then he is in violation of the law.
2. **Ask the dealer to put it in writing.** If your dealer does threaten to void a warranty, ask him to put it in writing and have it notarized so you can show it either to the OEM's zone service manager or to the manufacturer directly. That generally stops the service manager in his tracks.
3. **There are trade groups that will help out in "warranty warfare".** Carl Sheffer, vice president of OEM relations for SEMA (specialty Equipment Market Assoc.) often works on behalf of aftermarket firms who have difficulties with the OEM's. SEMA can provide a pamphlet that explains why denial of warranty service by dealerships is illegal. There are also other trade organizations for specific product lines that can help. SEMA can usually give you some pretty good contacts if you need additional help. ([www.sema.com](http://www.sema.com))
4. **It is not up to the local dealership to decide whether or not a vehicle's warranty will be voided.** Regardless of what your dealer tries to tell you, it is the manufacturer's warranty and up to the manufacturer to make the determination. The good news is that most OEM's back up aftermarket manufacturers unless there is justifiable cause for voiding the warranty.

Keep in mind that the dealer does NOT have to warranty any after market items you install, regardless of why they fail. Also, if an after market item you install causes failure to an OEM item, the dealer will not warranty that either. For example, if you install an air filter from company XYZ on your turbo charged diesel, and the filter assembly comes apart and is sucked into the turbo, the dealer will not warranty the turbo because it failed as a direct result of the filter malfunction.

By and large, most dealerships want to take care of their customers so they will remain loyal. They are obviously not interested in driving customers away. However, if your dealer is threatening to pull your warranty keep these things in mind.