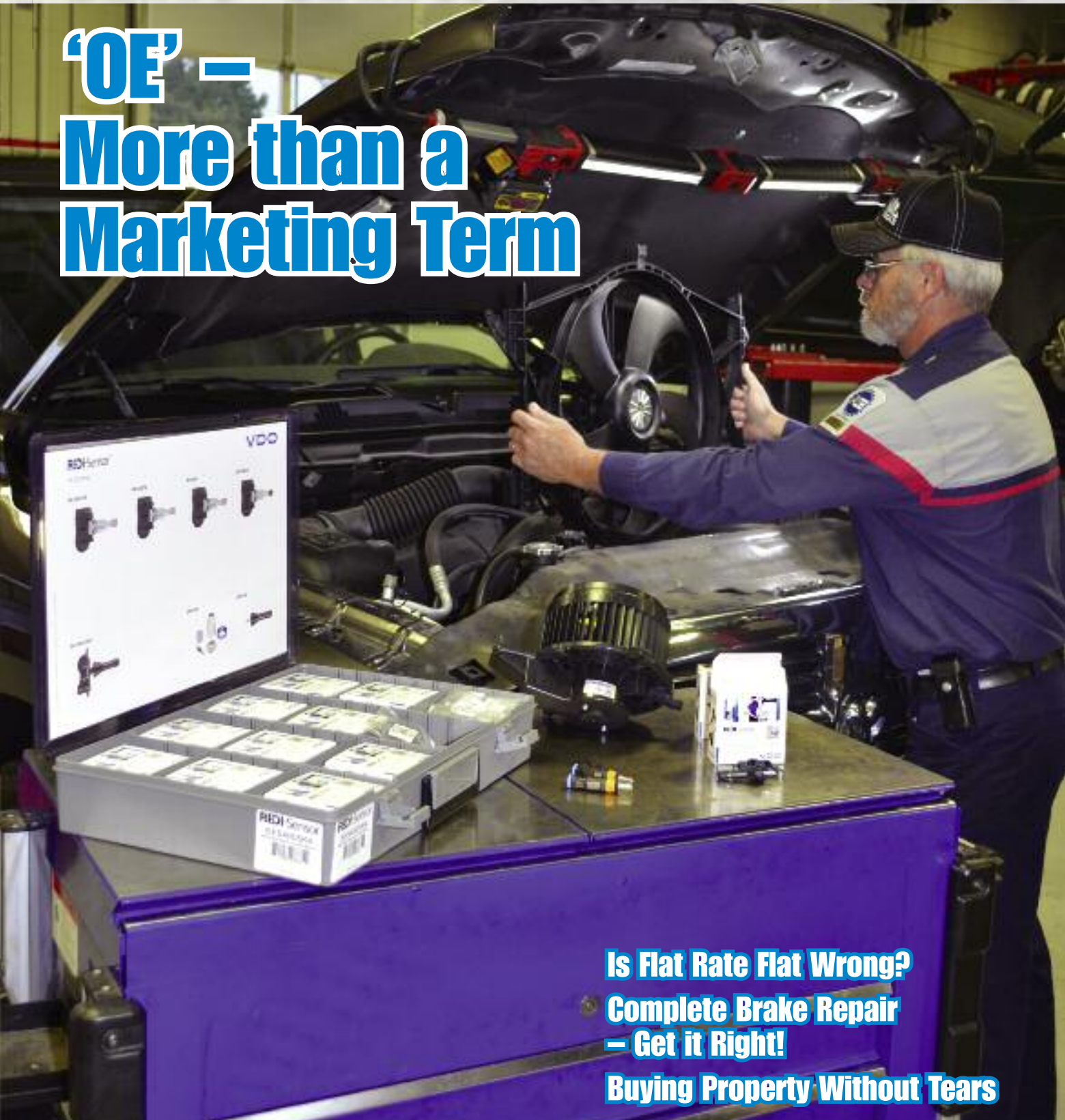


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'OE' – More than a Marketing Term



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Demand for VDO hybrid battery fans is growing since some hybrid vehicles have been on the road for as long as 16 years.



Continental Commercial Vehicles & Aftermarket 'OE' – More than a Marketing Term

By Jim Wilder Undercar Digest Editor

Leaders at Continental Commercial Vehicles & Aftermarket consider their company to be more than one that just offers replacement parts. In a world where some aftermarket parts producers compete mainly on price, many distributors and shops are turning to Continental because true OE product eliminates warranty issues, costly comebacks and dissatisfied motorists.

Howard Laster, head of Aftermarket Commercial Vehicles & Aftermarket North America, notes that the company's goal is to maintain the highest quality of traditional replacement parts, while continually offering new parts concepts and new product introductions designed to aid technicians in returning a vehicle back to

its original operating condition.

"OE" is not a marketing term when shops buy parts with the Continental brand, he said. Parent, Continental AG, founded in 1871, is one of the largest suppliers of original-equipment parts to vehicle manufacturers worldwide, and its aftermarket division leverages that vast OE knowledge to produce parts of the same exacting quality in all of its divisions, he said.

Fans and Motors

Continental offers more than 5,000 HVAC motors, cooling fan motors and complete engine cooling fan assemblies to the aftermarket. David Maclay, Head of Product Management, HVAC, TPMS, Chassis & Safety, explains that all of the company's motors

incorporate the exact electrical connectors required by the vehicle application with no flying leads or wire splicing required. Mounting flanges and ventilation tubes are in the same position and configuration as the factory units.

Hybrid Battery Cooling Fans

One of the latest introductions is Continental's first-to-market hybrid battery cooling fans, Maclay said. "Many hybrids have been on the market now for 15 to 16 years and are starting to reach the repair cycle on those parts."

Key applications include the Ford C-Max and Fusion, Lexus CT 200h and ES 3000h, and Toyota Avalon, Camry, Prius, and Prius V models, noted Christina Bergstrom, Product Manager.

"These fans are designed to pull



Electric motors to heat and cool seats will be available in 2019.



A Continental engine cooling fan is assembled and tested at the company's Allentown, Pa., facility.

in cool air from the passenger compartment, but can often get clogged with dust, pet fur and – who knows what, depending on how well you keep the interior of your car," Maclay said. "The efficiency of the battery is affected by the lack of cooling during a cycle. We saw this niche in the market and we came out with a product line of 15 part numbers. We are going to launch phase 2 at the beginning of 2019 with another 15 or so applications."

"More than 95% of today's hybrid vehicles rely on air-cooled technology to keep the battery cells cool during operation," he said.

"Because this is a new replacement product to the aftermarket, Continental has introduced YouTube-accessible installation videos," Maclay said. "We need to get the information out there."

Heated and Cooled Seats

Electric motors designed to heat and cool seats is another introduction that will be launched in early 2019, Maclay said. "Like many of our introductions these products offer aftermarket shops opportunities that had been dealer items only. This is another area where technicians are interested in having more knowledge. Over time, like anything else on a vehicle, wear and tear and environmental conditions take their toll. Like all of its offerings, the Continental units will be exact to OE and instructional videos will be available."

Engine Cooling Fans

Engine cooling fans aren't new, but their designs have changed. While technicians used to change the electric motors, the expansion of complete modules has grown tremendously, Maclay said. These fan modules will be sold under the Continental brand instead of the VDO brand, starting next year. Made exactly like those for OE, these fans differ dramatically from many of the aftermarket replacement fans available to shops. Each fan housing is constructed with 100% automotive grade plastic-resin compounds to ensure superior durability and thermal stability, Maclay said.

"Many aftermarket fans are constructed of recycled/reground plastics and don't have the structural integrity to handle vibration and twisting stress factors, which could result in the housing making contact with the fan blade," he said.

"Continental fans also feature the exclusive 'dual-bear-

ing' design for quieter and more efficient motor operation.

Availability is also a big plus for cooling fans from Continental, he said. "Cooling fans have a seasonal and regional demand," Maclay said. "July through early September are peak-demand months."

As a result, the most popular part numbers have components made in the U.S. and are assembled and tested at Continental's Allentown facility with a just-in-time process to make sure the units are available when needed.

These units are assembled, balanced for vibration-free operation and current-draw tested, all in the TS/ISO Certified facility.

Like other new products, instructional videos are included because many late-model fans that use integral control modules cannot be bench tested like the electric motors that are replaced on tradi-



Howard Laster David Maclay Christina Bergstrom Dan Caciolo James McGonagle



The VDO REDI-Sensor Installer Kit allows shops to reduce TPMS sensor inventories because of the kit's wide application range.

tional cooling fans. A typical battery charger test will “fry” the control module units, he said. The modules, however, are 100% tested for current draw and vibrations.

After conducting extensive research, Bergstrom said that about a dozen new part numbers will be added to the line in 2019.

TPMS

Continental’s line of VDO REDI-Sensor™ Multi-Application TPMS Sensors has become a well-known brand in the industry over the years and continues to grow in popularity since five part numbers of sensors provide huge coverage while reducing the need for large inventories, Maclay said.

“The most important thing to remember about REDI-Sensor is that Continental is a full-system supplier. We don’t make just the sensors. We make the tires, and we make the TPMS receivers. None of our competitors can say that.” The sensors are made on the same production lines as those made for OE and meet the same quality controls.

“We came out with an updated sensor this year,” he said. “It’s called REDI-Sensor SE10003A. It gives us another 6 to 8 million vehicle-population applications.



The ATE HCU unit makes replacement an easy and cost efficient repair. It is the latest addition to the ATE family of brake parts.



VDO OEM Direct Parts includes fuel modules, air actuators, electronic throttle valves, flex fuel sensors, manifold absolute pressure sensors, electric water pump with an integrated control unit, wheel-speed sensors, door-lock actuators, diesel pumps – and even the humble windshield washer pump.

VDO REDI-Sensor has all the information inside the sensor when it leaves the production line. You don’t need to put it on a tool and install the information like some of our competitors.”-

“Continental works very closely with major scan-tool manufacturers such as Bartec and ATEQ to make sure our products are working with their tools, both OEM and aftermarket,” Maclay noted.

Because VDO REDI-Sensor is a very technician-oriented product, the company will be introducing a new series of instructional videos to be released soon.

“The REDI-Sensor ‘Installer Kit,’ introduced two years ago has been very advantageous to shops, especially to those that are just getting into tire service,” Maclay said. “It gives them and their supplier the opportunity to gauge their needs.”

ATE Brake Products

ATE (pronounced Ah-tay) is the brand for Continental’s lines of hydraulic control units (HCU), brake pads, rotors, boosters, wear indica-

tors and wheel cylinders.

Dan Caciolo, Head of Product Management, Powertrain & Brake Systems, notes that the current ATE line offering encompasses unique solutions to ABS problems on popular Volkswagen/Audi and Volvo electronic control units. He explained that when the ABS control module fails, normally it’s only the hydraulic control unit (HCU) portion that is at fault. With an OE replacement HCU, the technician simply disconnects the old HCU, replacing it with the ATE MK60 HCU, saving the technician precious bay time. The unit comes complete with all hardware necessary for installation. Continental also offers printed instructions and an instructional video to ensure proper assembly, which can be viewed at: <https://goo.gl/8svuZ8>. Caciolo stresses that the ECU is the exact OEM product. More applications are expected for 2019.

“We don’t offer a ‘good’ or ‘better,’ only a ‘best,’” Caciolo said.

Continental also offers disc-brake pads and rotors, boosters, master cylinders, wheel-speed sensors and brake wear indicators. The ATE line includes many genuine OE parts that include coverage for 88% of European vehicles in North America – Alfa Romeo, Audi, BMW, Jaguar, Land Rover, Mercedes-Benz, MINI, Porsche, Range Rover, Renault, Saab, smart, Volkswagen, and Volvo. The pads are formulated to meet original-equipment friction specifications and are tested to meet or exceed manufacturers’ quality standards.

While the United States does

not have any federal brake standards, ATE Original Brake Pads meet all safety provisions set out by ECE regulations also known as the European Union’s R90 regulation that sets design, construction and performance requirements and test protocols for replacement brake linings. “That braking standard has 14 different tests that are mandatory if you are going to sell brake pads in Europe,” he said.

“We go above and beyond. We not only test the performance side, we test the comfort side.” In addition, ATE offers more than 150 friction formulations that are available on a significant number of domestic pad applications in addition to the European vehicle coverage, he said.

Brake rotors are also an important segment of the ATE line, he said. ATE Original rotors meet European standards as well. The rotor weighs the same as the original rotor and meets all OE criteria, he said.

VDO OEM Direct Parts

Over the years many popular parts that were originally OE in design have been outsourced by many companies with distributors and technicians alike complaining and asking companies such as Continental for better quality products. That’s because the outsourced parts often don’t resemble the original part and have an extremely high-failure rate. Because of that, Continental’s VDO division released a line called OEM Direct Parts in 2014 that includes fuel modules, air actuators, elec-

tronic throttle valves, flex fuel sensors, manifold absolute pressure sensors, electric water pump with an integrated control unit, wheel-speed sensors, door-lock actuators, diesel pumps – and even the humble windshield washer pump.

The VDO electronic catalog features 360° parts images so technicians can see the part is the same design as the part that is being replaced.

Caciolo noted that the OEM Direct Parts program started with fuel modules. “That is one of the first lines that so many companies send directly to China for manufacturing. The quality of many of these units have always been in question. If the OEM pump was designed to go 100,000 miles or more, our VDO Direct Parts replacement pump will last that long as well, because it is built the same as OEM.”

Windshield washer pumps are a latest new product addition to the OEM Direct Parts line. “When we looked into the aftermarket we found that no one – not one single company – offered OE replacement windshield washer pumps,” Caciolo said. “They were highly universal and, regardless of the brand, they were virtually all coming from the same place. Some barely functioned even close to OE.”



Continental offers a wide range of windshield washer pumps.



Continental offers a variety of training videos that cover valuable technical information about its products.

“To date, VDO offers a superior pump with three part numbers for most European models, as well as applications for GM, Ford and Honda,” he said. “We are the only OE manufacturer that offers these for the aftermarket.”

While still in its infancy, feedback has been positive, James McGonagle, Head of IAM Sales, said. “A typical response from a distributor is, ‘There is only one manufacturer out there for these pumps. If you’ve got something that is OE and you’ve got some coverage, we want to look at it.’ We have always had our REDI-Sensor TPMS program to provide an opportunity with a prospective customer, now the OEM Direct Parts program is the conversation point as well because distributors are willing to build an OEM program. They want to add a secondary offering because they don’t want the warranty issues and comebacks.”

“Shops don’t want to do the same job twice,” McGonagle said. “And that’s why so many shop operations are turning to Continental.” ■

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