

WARRANTIES ON PARTS PURCHASES



Ralph Seekins

I was recently involved in a discussion regarding the extent and applicability of warranty coverage for automotive parts or assemblies that are purchased from auto dealerships or parts stores. The question was whether or not a repair shop that purchased a part or an assembly (i.e., an engine block) from a parts supplier and that later installed the part was a responsible party to a covered failure of the part or assembly. It's not an easy question and the answer depends on a lot of "ifs."

At most parts outlets, the invoice will expressly point out that the only warranty on the parts purchased are those that may be offered by the manufacturer and will specifically disclaim all warranties by the parts retailer. This is to make sure the purchaser understands that it is the manufacturer and not the seller that offers the warranty on the parts.

Next, most repair shops also conspicuously disclaim any

warranty coverage of the parts they install. Typically, their disclaimer will state something to the effect that, if there is any warranty, it is only the warranty provided by the manufacturer of the part or assembly. If any warranty is provided by the repair shop, it will typically be limited to a warranty on the workmanship they performed.

For example, at our dealership we sell Ford Motor Company supplied parts every day. Ford – not the dealership – is the warrantor of those parts against any defect in factory-supplied material or workmanship. And different parts and assemblies have different warranties. We, of course, have copies of all the applicable warranties available for the purchaser. If the part fails due to factory supplied material or workmanship within the warranty period, it is covered and they will pay to have it replaced.

However, if the part fails due to things like abuse, misuse, neglect, alteration, accident, racing or the use of non-factory parts, or parts that are replaced as a part of normal maintenance (i.e., oil and filters) there will be no coverage. Likewise, manufacturers and suppliers will normally disclaim, to the extent allowed by law, loss of time, inconvenience, loss of use of the vehicle, commercial loss, and consequential damages.

So, what does that mean to you? First, when you need to

purchase a part for your car or truck, avoid those that do not come with a warranty. The part may cost a little more but it is most likely worth the peace of mind that comes with a reputable warranty. Manufacturers like Ford, GM, Chrysler and others provide a solid warranty. And parts distributed through outlets like NAPA also carry manufacturer's warranties. And, believe me, any reputable parts retailer will be glad to provide you with a copy of the warranty coverage for the parts they sell.

And, next, when having a repair shop work on your vehicle, ask about what warranty is provided on the parts they install. I can't tell you how many sad stories I've heard in the more than 40 years I've been in the automobile business that relate to owners who purchased substandard parts or had substandard parts installed at cut-rate prices only to find out that there was no warranty when the part failed prematurely.

Here's where, once again, I tell you that I am not a lawyer and that the advice I give here is based on years of practical experience. A little bit of care up front will pay big dividends in the long run.

Ralph Seekins has more than 40 years' experience in the automotive industry. He started as a mechanic, worked in sales, and for the past 32 years, has been the owner of Seekins Ford Lincoln Mercury.