

Aftermarket Oil Additives

Off-the-shelf oil additives have been around for years, and while their marketing and claims can be convincing enough to make you think they are a “mechanic in a bottle,” there is unfortunately no such product. Performance benefits are typically exaggerated, and there are multiple potential downsides to using these additives of which consumers may not be aware.

In most cases, customers purchase an oil additive to solve a problem. Some additives claim to quiet engine noise, reduce oil consumption or even fix a slipping transmission. Whatever the symptom, most additives are designed to fix something. However, because these problems are mechanical in nature, they require physical investigation and repair to guarantee they are resolved.

An additive cannot turn a standard, sub-par lubricant into a premium, high-end lubricant. If you purchase a poorly formulated motor oil, you receive a poorly performing oil. The use of an aftermarket additive will not change that. If you want better performance from your oil, it is best to purchase a premium product from the start.

A fully formulated lubricant is blended with high-quality base oils and a well-built additive package. It is a finely tuned recipe that is purpose-built for its designed application. Adding a separate product into the mix will change that chemistry and the product may not perform as the manufacturer intended. This can lead to more harm than good. Some chemistries used in aftermarket additives have been found to become corrosive over time, particularly with chlorine-based additives. Additionally, most aftermarket additives are blended with a high-viscosity base oil, which can change the viscosity of the primary lubricant, impacting cold starts and engine operating temperature.

Plus, base oils can only carry so much additive. When the base oil becomes oversaturated, the supplemental additive can ultimately settle out, wasting money and potentially negatively altering the chemistry of the lubricant. Using aftermarket additives can also void the lubricant warranty and the original equipment manufacturer (OEM) warranty of your vehicle or equipment (if applicable).

In most cases, aftermarket oil additives provide only temporary benefits while impacting the overall chemistry of the lubricant. They are not designed to fix preexisting problems. A quality lubricant is carefully formulated to meet specific OEM requirements, and there is no data indicating it will continue to meet these specs if an aftermarket additive is used. For the best protection, use a quality synthetic oil and diagnose mechanical issues as quickly as possible.