What is a TPMS Diagnostic tool anyways?

These days if you’re involved in the TPMS Service space in any capacity, you’re constantly bombarded with a new type of programmable replacement sensor. With every new sensor there also seems to be a deal that combines sensors and tools together. On the surface you make think this is a good thing, but it often times difficult to separate the wheat from the chaff in these “deals.” Buried in all the puffery of the “latest and greatest free tool offer” is the harsh reality that the claims made about the “free tool” aren’t entirely accurate. The old adage of buyer beware should be followed.

First of all, a quick reminder, in previous articles we covered the various type of aftermarket replacement sensors. Programmable sensors require a programming tool. Which is often why there are sensor offers which include the programmer as part of the deal. No one understands this better since Bartec were the first to pioneer at the vehicle sensor programming, when we integrated the programming of the Schrader EZ-sensor™ to our range of TPMS tools. Where we have trouble, and so should you, is when the sensor programming tool gets described as a “diagnostic tool.” We take exception because a great deal of resource is required to make a truly diagnostic tool, particularly one that combines TPMS sensor function, with OBD connectivity, and inflation pressure [placard] programming.

Diagnose [dahy-uh g-nohs, -nohz, dahy-uh g-nohs, -nohz], verb (used with object), to ascertain the cause or nature of (a disorder, malfunction, problem, etc.) from the symptoms. We could extend this meaning to automotive diagnostics as ascertaining the cause or nature of a malfunction from the symptoms.

In the early days of TPMS service, simple sensor testing was all that was needed. A basic TPMS Activation tool could determine whether or not a sensor was functional. Of course, as technology evolved, activation tools could not only determine if the sensor was working or not, but that is was the proper type for the vehicle. These early basic tools could even assist in the stationary relearn of vehicles….ah, the good ole day’s right?

Today however, proper TPMS service requires much more. Just knowing if the sensor is working, or simply “shutting off the light” is NOT ENOUGH. Proper TPMS Service means ascertaining the cause or nature of (a disorder, malfunction, problem, etc.) from the symptoms. Technicians need the complete picture. TPMS Fault Codes or Diagnostic Trouble Codes [DTC’s] help the technician to better understand why there’s a TPMS MIL.
The technician needs to see that the sensors in the wheels match what is programmed to the control module. The technician can use TPMS DTC’s to validate what’s functioning and what is not. Today’s TPMS technician needs to be able to extract data from the vehicle and present it in a format the consumer can understand. In other words, today’s TPMS technicians need a **REAL DIAGNOSTIC solution**.

**Here are the actual characteristic of a diagnostic TPMS tool:**

- Activates, decodes and provides critical TPMS sensor data by vehicle type.
- Can connect to the control module through OBDII and detect TPMS fault codes [DTC’s] and record the data.
- Can decode the TPMS DTC’s to inform the technician as to where they should start work.
- Can turn the TPMS light off, and more importantly help understand the reason it is on.
- Can create a “before and after” report that includes sensor information, condition of the TPMS, fault codes, tire pressure and temperature, in a format your customer can understand.
- Can perform all types of vehicle relearns through the OBDII.
- Can modify the **recommended inflation pressure** [placard] for aftermarket wheel/tire packages.
- Can program a range of aftermarket sensors, not just “their brand”
- Designed for the robust environment that is a an automotive repair shop
- Can be updated via a wireless connection, or an SD card, in addition to a computer connection.
- Contains relearn procedures, technical tips, and replacement sensor information, all designed to help technicians get the job done right!

You have to consider many things when making investments in your business. Don’t be afraid to ask the hard questions of the tool company sales representatives. How they work, how much technical support do they provide, how often are updates available, do their tools do what they claim [make them show you]? These are questions that left unanswered leave your business open to risk. The tool partner you choose will either help you to provide better service and an improved bottom line, or they will cost you money.

Call a **Bartec Sales Person** today and schedule a demonstration of one of our TPMS Tool solutions!