Wheel Bearing Information

The wheel bearings on the Subaru SVX are prone to fail prematurely. The reason for the initial failure is that the original seals allowed water to get into the bearings (the seals have since been redesigned to prevent this). Subsequent failures occur because the proper grease is not used when repacking the bearings AND over tightening of the lateral link bolt and the axle nut.

You need to make sure the mechanic knows how to properly install the wheel bearings. There are 4 technical service bulletins issued by Subaru on proper bearing installation for the SVX!

First, the bearings are made in Japan, they are sent by ship to the USA. Ship travel promotes rust. Rust is a no-no for bearings. To alleviate this problem the bearings are coated in a very light grease for shipping. The contact points between the balls and the race (a race is a circular steel ring that the balls roll on inside the bearing) generates tremendous pressure and heat. Pressure and temperature break down lubricants (oil & grease) so that they no longer function properly. The light shipping grease cannot withstand the pressure and temperature that is generated by the bearing. It breaks down and loses its lubricating qualities (it becomes varnish).

Therefore this shipping grease must be FULLY removed and a good heavy-duty grease should be applied to the bearing before it is installed. This is not always done or done poorly. Therefore the newly installed bearing goes bad rather quickly.

Another problem is using the proper tools to remove and install the bearing (Bigger hammers don't make for better installations). Make sure a bearing press or a hub tamer is used. The surfaces should be cleaned and checked for "out-of-roundness" (the proper tool for this is a micrometer calipers). Also, just because you bring the car to a Subaru service dept. doesn't mean that they know what to do or have the proper tools. But the odds are better that they do.

Second, all the nuts and bolts must be tightened to exact specifications...over tighten them and you'll be back for more wheel bearings. The proper torque specs for the lug nuts are 72-87 ft/lbs. Most shop impact wrenches are set to around 120 ft/lbs. so this is important.