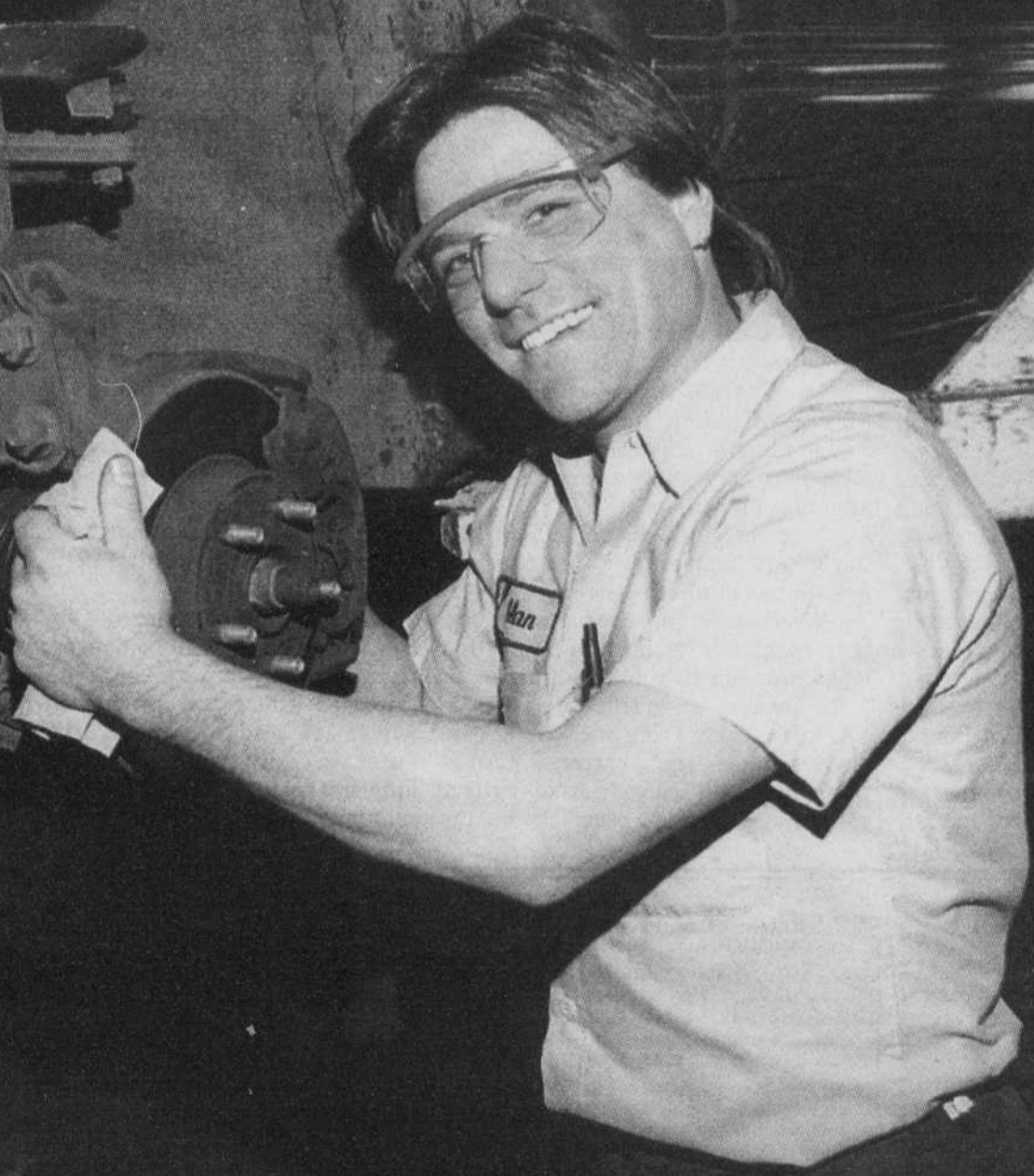


THE
RECORD

Advertorial
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MARCH MAINTENANCE

Keep Your Vehicle At Its Peak Performance

Getting rid of winter's grime can add life to your car

(SOP) The wrath of winter has taken its toll on our vehicles and now's the time for service. Here are a few suggestions from some experts.

Let's start with the ability to see and be seen. The windshield has collected all kinds of things and needs a thorough cleaning. Choose a cleanser that won't scratch the glass. Wet the glass generously, apply the cleanser, scrub and rinse thoroughly.

Winter operation of heaters and defrosters can leave a film on the inside of the windows. Clean them with a mixture of ammonia and water.

A trick to improve your windshield wipers' effectiveness is to clean them with alcohol. If they still streak, replace the inserts or the blades. Once you have the glass cleaned, use a car wash solution and wash mitt to get rid of winter grime on the paint.

To help avoid scratching the paint, wash the dirty, lower surfaces of the vehicle with a separate bucket of solution.

Next, select a good quality wax and go to work. Wax seals the paint and protects it from oxidation and acid rain, especially important with today's paints. Using a brush, wash the wheels, inspecting the inner surfaces for mud build up.

Next, take a few minutes to do a complete light check: turn signals, stop lamps, back up lamps, and even the license plate lamps.

Pay some attention to the interior, too. Remove the floor mats and vacuum the carpets. Wipe down vinyl and leather surfaces. Vacuum the seats, especially around the stitching. Dirt that builds up in the seams acts as an abrasive and shortens the thread's life.

Leather needs to be fed with a good quality preservative.

Now we need to visit under the hood. Of course you've stayed right on top of the engine oil change intervals, right? If not, spring is a great time to get back on track.

If you missed the coolant flush last fall, get it done before the hot summer driving season. Check the battery and cables. If there are signs of corrosion, get it serviced or clean it yourself. Don't overlook removing the cables and cleaning the battery posts.

Check all fluid levels and take a good look at the belts and hoses. A good rule of thumb is the four-year rule: if it's rubber, replace it when it's four years old.

Don't forget the trunk. It should not be used as an attic.

All that extra weight can reduce your fuel mileage, affect braking and han-



dling, and cause the suspension to work overtime. Open the trunk to check the air in the spare tire, even the space saver spares. Take a look at the jack, jack handle and the lug wrench. You may discover a missing lug wrench, or a broken jack.

Spring is the time to get the trusty vehicle looking and driving younger again. This kind of investment pays big dividends and adds to your driving enjoyment.

Test your knowledge about auto batteries

(SOP) Take this test and find out how much you know about auto-battery safety. All questions should be answered true or false.

1. Most batteries in today's cars are called "maintenance-free," which means they don't require regular check-ups.

2. Motorists should own a set of jumper cables tested and approved by the Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE).

3. All you need to jump-start a vehicle with a dead battery is a set of jumper cables.

4. Jump-starting a dead car battery is simple if you know the proper and safe

procedures.

5. Never clamp the negative cable to the negative post of the dead battery.

6. If battery acid comes in contact with one of your eyes, seek medical attention immediately.

7. In a vehicle-battery explosion, flying battery fragments can cause serious eye injuries or blindness.

8. Wearing sunglasses or a pair of regular eyeglasses is enough protection when jump-starting disabled car.

The answers are as follows:

1. False. There is no such thing as a "maintenance-free" battery. Battery posts may still corrode, and battery cases may still crack, especially during

the winter.

Preventive maintenance is your best defense against vehicle failure. Motorists should check car batteries before winter sets in.

2. True. Jumper cables tested and approved by the SAE mean the cables meet the most stringent safety standards.

Jumper cables that are not in good condition actually can be dangerous to the person jump-starting the car. Damaged cables may produce sparks, which can lead to battery explosion. Purchase cables that are at least 12 feet long and colour-coded. Look for the SAE symbol on the label.

3. False. In addition to jumper cables, every car should have the following essentials for jump-starting splashproof safety goggles for eye protection, flashlight, and step-by-step guide for jump-starting a car.

4. True. The best way to ensure that you are following the proper procedures is to have the jump-start instructions handy in the car.

Store the directions where you can find them easily, like under the hood, in you glove compartment or with the jumper cables.

5. True. This is a sure way to cause a spark, which can lead to battery explosion.

All batteries produce hydrogen and oxygen gases. If the hydrogen gas comes

into contact with a spark, the battery can explode, sending pieces of the battery and acid flying.

You should clamp the last connection to a good ground in the disabled car, like the engine block, car frame or other unpainted metallic surface.

6. False. The injured motorist should flush the affected eye with the first drinkable liquid handy, like water, milk, soft drinks or juice. The longer you wait, the greater the chances of a serious eye injury. Flush the eye for at least 15 minutes before seeking emergency medical attention.

7. True. However, a battery also contains sulfuric acid, which can burn through clothing.

In an explosion, the acid is as dangerous to the eyes as the battery pieces, because it can severely burn the delicate eye tissue.

8. False. Eyeglasses that are not made of polycarbonate (the most impact resistant material available) can crack, or break easily. Regular glasses also cannot protect your eyes from acid that can enter from the side.

That's why associations dedicated to preventing blindness recommend using splashproof safety goggles (designed for occupational use and marked with a Z87 logo) made with a polycarbonate lens when jump-starting a car battery.

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Pretrip inspection can help you avoid problems down the road

(SOP) There is no better way to ruin that much-needed spring holiday than to have your car suffer a mechanical failure along the way. And as any competent mechanic will tell you, most roadside breakdowns could easily be avoided with a pre-trip inspection. Even well cared for vehicles should be given a quick once-over.

The first item to be checked should be the vehicles' tires. As well as postponing your fun, a blowout at high-speed can endanger you and your loved ones. You can never be too careful about inspecting tread wear and tire pressure.

Tire pressure is the most obvious thing to check, but don't just rely on a visual check to see if they are noticeably flat. Although it takes as much as a 10-psi drop in pressure for a tire to be visibly soft, running even three psi lower than the tire manufacturer's specification can cause problems.

The only solution is to use a tire pressure gauge; this is one item no motorist should be without. The key point is to always check the car's tire pressures cold. The only time to do that is first thing in the morning, before setting out on your trip. Of course, if you don't have your own pressure gauge, take the car to the nearest garage (so the tires don't heat up) to have them make the inspection. Warmed tires will give higher readings, so checking pressures after a day of hard driving will give incorrect readings. The car's manual should give

specific recommendations for tire pressure, but if no specifications are available, 32 psi is a safe number as a starting point.

While you're at it, check out the tires' tread life. To find out how worn the tires are, move the vehicle until the wear bars on each tire's tread is visible. These are rubber bars that run between the tire's treads and are slightly recessed. If a tire's tread is the same height as the wear bar, it definitely needs replacing. Not only is there a far greater possibility of a blow-out with worn tires, but the lack of depth means there's a greater chance of hydroplaning, or complete loss of traction, on wet roads.

Another common problem, usually associated with older tires, is sidewall cracking. As tires get old, they dry and, with constant flexing, the sidewalls crack. To be on the safe side, any tire with sidewall cracks should be replaced. In fact, tire manufacturers recommend replacing tires every five years.

Probably the next most important area to check is the vehicle's cooling system. Overheating is one of the more common causes of breakdown. First, the upper and lower rad hoses should be checked for cracks.

Like tires, the rubber hoses on your vehicle age, dry and crack. Squeeze each hose. They should be firm to the touch. Soft hoses are an indication that they're old and should be replaced.

One of the two areas that most of us can't check is the condition of the radiator and its antifreeze. Your local mechanic can pressurize the radiator to check its condition. At the same time, have the condition of the antifreeze checked. A good rule of thumb is to change or recycle the antifreeze every two or three years. Most people simply ignore their car's coolant scheduled maintenance, so having a mechanic give it the once-over is a good idea.

If you plan to tow a trailer, a good investment would be a trip to the transmission shop. Like your engine, the transmission needs to have its fluids changed on a regular basis. With transmission repairs usually running in the thousands, a \$100 inspection and fluid change is cheap insurance.

As heat is the biggest enemy of automatic transmissions, a transmission cooler might be a wise investment for anyone towing a heavy trailer. Today's smaller, harder working transmissions overheat more easily than earlier models. Transmission coolers can increase their life dramatically.

Air conditioning is one of those areas to which most of us pay little attention until it stops working. But a malfunctioning a/c system is a sure road to agony on any summer vacation. Like the cooling system, its hoses age and need periodic replacement to prevent unwanted break downs.

Brakes are another safety item that bear inspecting. Many brake and muffler shops offer free inspections. Even if there is a small expense, it's a lot cheaper than an unexpected brake failure.

If it's been a while since a tune-up, a long trip is a fine excuse to complete the scheduled engine maintenance. Performing the basic plugs and a clean air filter will definitely improve fuel mileage.

While packing the requisite lawn chairs and inflatable rafts, always include a few tools and spare parts like hose clamps, electrical tape, assorted fuses and wire. Even these very basic items can be the difference between a

successful vacation and one spent by the side of the road waiting for a tow truck to appear.

A quick trip to your mechanic for a pretrip inspection is money well spent. There are few things worse than spending your precious holiday in a garage waiting to have your car repaired.

Two new cars for Rolls-Royce

(SOP) After almost two decades of coasting in its current model lineup, Rolls-Royce says it will launch two new cars before the end of the century.

There'll be a model for each of the company's lines—Rolls-Royce and Bentley—and they'll be evolutionary developments on what we have now. The British ultraluxury car company says the new models will be rounder than the current lineup of cars, but still bear a strong family resemblance.

Don't expect either new unit in the

entrylevel luxury car segment; they'll stay at the top end of the price range with their siblings. They'll also be highly individualized, since about half of all Rolls and Bentley models go out with significant personalization and the company wants to see more of that.

The company hopes that the new models will drive annual sales of the exclusive brands to about 2,500 which would represent an increase of about 25 percent. Virtually none of them are sold in Canada, by the way.



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Check engine oil regularly

(SOP) An early warning sign of engine wear is excessive oil consumption, which is usually accompanied by blue-black exhaust smoke.

A common reason for this condition is worn valve guide seals.

Engine values.

The valves in a typical engine may open and close as often as 100,000 times per hour at highway speeds. The stem of the valve, sliding up and down in its guide, is fitted with a special seal designed to permit only a limited amount of oil to pass. (Some oil is nec-

essary for lubrication.)

When these seals wear or harden, oil burning begins.

Many of the conditions which cause an engine to burn oil prematurely are due to vehicle neglect.

Piston rings, for example, can wear out prematurely if you do not change the oil and filter regularly. Worn rings lead to excessive oil consumption.

There's only one satisfactory cure for worn piston rings: major engine work, which normally is accompanied by replacement of bearings, timing belt or chain, valve guides and other worn internal components.

At that time, valves are ground or replaced. This procedure, combined with a complete tune-up, usually will return the engine to nearly new performance.

Today's vehicles are driven for more than 225,000 km and last up to 12 years, compared with being driven only 150,000 km and lasting less than 10 years in the 1970s. So it is worth it to properly maintain your vehicle and its engine.

Check your engine oil regularly.

If oil is overfull or smells like gasoline, it may be diluted with gasoline, thereby having lost some of its lubricating qualities.

Keep engine tuned.

If you have to pump the accelerator to keep the engine from stalling, you may be pumping raw gasoline into the crank case. This situation can be avoided by keeping the engine



properly tuned.

Misfiring spark plugs can aggravate a situation such as this because they permit raw, unburned gasoline to wash into the crank case.

Not only does this create hard starting, it also accelerates wear due to diluted engine oil.

Another factor in oil burning is a malfunctioning positive crank case ventilation (PVC) valve, which is intended to route oil vapors through the combustion chamber rather than permitting them to escape into the atmosphere.

If the PVC system is not in proper working order, it can be the cause of oil burning.

Don't wait!

Remember, excessive oil burning is a condition that gradually gets worse and can affect other aspects of the engine.

Like so many other car troubles, early detection and correction are essential—and can save you a great deal of money in the long run.

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Biking makes a comeback

(SOP) Could this be the year that the motorcycle industry finally shakes off its doldrums? After years of slumping sales, 1997 looks like the year biking made a comeback.

Sales were on the increase, if only by a smidgen. Although the few hundred extra motorcycles sold in Canada aren't likely to rejuvenate Japan's slumping

Nikkei index, motorcycle manufacturers are wearing smiles for the first time in years.

It's partly because of the tasty tidbits they have to offer. Japan Inc. has finally discovered the V-twin superbike and Triumph has launched the most delectable sportbike since Ducati shocked the world with its 916.

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Seatbelts are the forgotten lifesavers

(SOP) Cars today are fitted with all sorts of wonderful safety devices: three-point shoulder belts at all seating positions, front airbags, side airbags, head airbags, two-wheel and four-wheel antilock brakes, traction control, stability control, padded dashboards and padded knee bolsters.

And what you can't see are the engineered crumple zones that allow the force of a head-on or partially-off-set crash to be spread throughout the vehicle before that horrible energy gets to you. Meanwhile, the engine is designed to slide under, not into, the passenger compartment.

Yet of all the safety devices in your car, seatbelts remain the most critical piece of the equation.

What's the condition of your car's seatbelts? When was the last time you inspected them? If you've been in a minor collision with that car, did you have the

seatbelts replaced?

Safety experts say that many people are risking injury by not replacing their seatbelts. Any time a car needs towing, it's generally a sufficient enough crash to replace any belts that were in use at the time.

On average, it costs in the neighbourhood of \$275 to replace each seatbelt in a late model vehicle. Of course, for those people who never suffer even a minor fender bender, rest assured that you probably will never need to worry about replacing your safety belts. Those belts are designed to last the lifetime of the car.

What you need to be alert for, however, are unseen tears or stretching in the wake of an accident. Car crash experts suggest replacing seatbelts after any accident involving speeds exceeding 25 km/h. And no matter what your

speed, if you've been in an accident, the belts need a thorough inspection.

Of course, you'll find that very recommendation in most—if not all—owner's manuals. Some manufacturers go even farther. They suggest replacing seatbelts after 10 years or 160,000 kilometres.

Safety experts say you should replace your belts if there are visible tears or cracks in the plastic housing or if the belt droops or doesn't lie flat on the seat back.

Driving with sunglasses

(SOP) Early on, there was light, according to an old, but widely quoted book. And light, the essential component of vision, is a conundrum. Since light is a form of energy, some is good, but too much is harmful. That's the root of most persons' aversion to intense light or reflected glare. The case for sunglass use is strong. They increase comfort, reduce eye strain and, in the long run, invoke beneficial aspects by diminishing the amount of light your eye encounters.

It's well known that intense light can damage the eye, particularly the retina, the nerve tissue at the back. The admonition not to stare at the sun is a way of avoiding retinal burn, which causes permanent vision loss.

Vision research is now exploring whether ambient light damages your eyes over the course of a lifetime. One theory posits that the decline in vision as we age, age related macular degeneration, might be fore-stalled by the use of sunglasses.

Given the vagaries of the research thus far, eye care professionals we talked with don't have ironclad recommendations. (This, of course, assumes there are no other vision problems, such as blurry or painful vision.) Their practical tips are modest:

- Sunglasses should be comfortable, eliminating or greatly reducing any distress caused by bright light, but not so dark that visual acuity is impaired.
- Sunglasses should be neutrally tinted, so as not to alter color

perception, specifically the red, yellow and green of traffic signals or instrument warning lights.

- Optical quality should be high, so there's no annoying and fatiguing image distortion. And lenses should be impact resistant to help protect against eye injuries.

These seemingly simple tips grow out of technical research by aviation groups and major producers of lenses. The first consideration is the degree of absorption of visible light a sunglass offers. Light sensitivity varies widely among people, so color intensity is often a matter of individual preference.

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Regular and preventive maintenance

(SOP) If you want your vehicle to remain in excellent, dependable working order, you know that you have to give it some tender loving care in the form of regular and preventive maintenance.

Don't wait until it breaks before you fix it—that could cost you a great deal of money.

The average Canadian consumer spends more than \$700 per year on car maintenance. By practicing regular maintenance, you can reduce that amount and prolong the life of your vehicle.

Rule No.1 for finding a good mechanic/technician: don't wait until you're desperate for help.

Finding an automotive-service technician you trust is like finding a doctor or a minister—you need to build

a relationship based on trust and mutual respect. These things don't happen overnight.

Most of the business for a repair garage is from referrals. The only way to get referral business is from satisfied customers. So if you're looking for a new automotive-service technician, ask around.

Ask your friends, relatives, business associates, church members—anyone you can think of. You'll probably get a more reliable feel for who is good and who is not by getting several opinions rather than just one.

If you get a chance, drop in and meet the technicians who will be working on your car.

Is the shop tidy and well organized?

Do they have the latest computer equipment?

Is there evidence that the mechanics in the shop take regular training courses on the latest automotive and diagnostic technology?

The days of the mechanic under the hood with a screw-driver, tuning things until they sing just right, are a distant memory. Now, they have to be computer literate technicians, interpreting the communications between

the onboard computer system and the diagnostic computers in the shop.

Whether you go to an independent garage, a department store, or a franchised repair centre doesn't matter all that much. In the end, it all comes down to trust. You're looking for somebody who is willing to tell you which repairs should be made immediately, which can be delayed without affecting safety, and which are completely optional for performance upgrades. Look for an ASE certified automotive technician or a PRO technician.

ASE's mission is to improve the quality of automotive service and repair through the voluntary testing and certification of automotive technicians. ASE was founded in the United States in 1972, but it has only recently begun testing in Canada.

ASE automotive-service technicians have the credentials to prove their competence in a variety of automotive sectors and specialties. If your automotive technicians have an ASE patch on their uniforms, it means they passed a tough automotive test designed to eval-

uate whether or not their skills are up-to-date with the latest automotive repair techniques. It provides you with a valuable yardstick by which to measure the knowledge and skills of your technicians.

A PRO automotive service technician subscribes to a strict code of ethics. The PRO program emphasizes three key points: professionalism, responsibility to the industry; and obligation to the public.

You can help your automotive-service technician, too. When you take your car in with a problem, tell the technician what the symptoms are—not what you think is the problem. Describes whether the symptoms occur when the car is warm or cold, at high-ways speeds or in the city, stopping or accelerating, and so on.

Get to know your car, too. Read through the owner's manual so you know what to expect. Turn off your stereo once in a while and listen to the sound of your car when it's healthy, so you're better able to notice when it needs help.



Periodic checkups

(SOP) Many factors could explain why car owners tend to neglect to inspect their vehicles. For example, self-serve gas stations have reversed the trend of routine inspections of tire pressure and engine oil level, usually performed by attendants at full-service gas stations. Others believe that because of the technological advances in automobile manufacturing, not as much maintenance is needed.

Of course you have to pay attention to your car as soon as it behaves out of the ordinary. However, routine inspection may delay, if not prevent, these extraordinary circumstances from even occurring and will certainly prolong your car's life.

The following maintenance tips are recommended:

Gas and air filters: They must be changed with every spark plug change. The air filter should be changed more often, especially if you travel on gravel

roads. Oil filter: It is recommended that it be changed with every oil change. Otherwise, the new oil will be immediately contaminated by the litter of dirty oil in the old filter.

Brake fluid: This should be checked with every oil change, and especially if the dashboard indicator lights up. If you have to add fluid two or three times, it's a sure sign that something is wrong. The drums and disc plates should be checked every 25,000 kilometers. If you have developed the bad habit of resting your foot on the brake pedal or you brake often, you should do it every 15,000 km. instead.

Battery terminals: With every oil change, check for corrosion deposits on the battery terminals. If necessary, disconnect the battery and clean it and the cables.

Spark plug cables: Should be inspected with every spark plug change.

Transmission oil and filter: The transmission oil level should be checked with every oil change. Change the oil and filter according to the manufacturer's instructions

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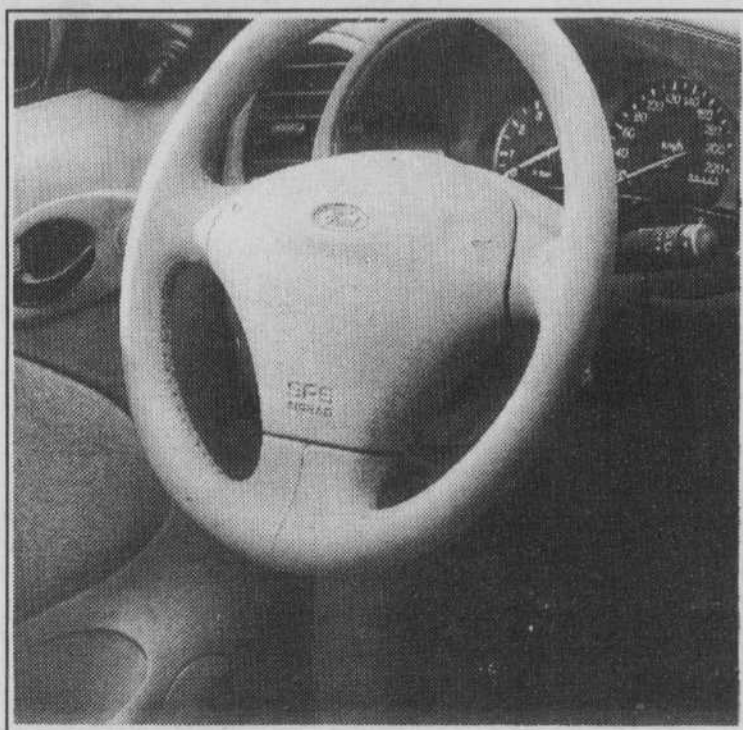
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Taking an active role in the maintenance of the vehicle



(SOP) Taking an active part in the maintenance and safety of your vehicle doesn't have to be a major undertaking.

Many car owners have never even looked under their own automobile's hood—it intimidates them. But it isn't necessary to know how everything works. All you really have to do is have someone who knows about cars show you where some key components are located.

For example, the following list—courtesy of the Automotive Cooling system Institute—is a brief

overview of various parts and basic maintenance checks (when applicable) within a vehicle's cooling system.

• **Coolant.** Sometimes called antifreeze, it circulates through the system to keep the engine cool. It also is a rust and corrosion inhibitor.

No specific maintenance checks.

• **Fan.** When the car is at idle or being driven in heavy traffic at lower speeds, the fan pulls cool air through the radiator.

Look for wobbling, bent or loose fan blades. A good fan should not turn more than 1 1/2 turns if spun by hand when the engine is off and warm.

• **Heater core.**

Hot coolant warms up the core to heat the inside of the car.

Visually inspect for leaks. If there is a puddle on the

floorboard or the smell of antifreeze in the passenger compartment, heater-core failure is likely.

• **Blower motor.** This motor blows air through the heater core.

Noise with the component could indicate a problem. However, there are no specific

maintenance checks.

• **Water pump.** This mechanism circulates coolant through the engine block, radiator and heater core.

Inspect around the pump for leaks. The first sign of failure is a small leak. Other signs include bearing noise, like rumbling or growling, loss of coolant and fan wobble.

• **Coolant temperature sensor.** This sends the temperature of the coolant to gauges and the engine control computer.

No specific maintenance checks.



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Are you worried when faced with an auto repair?

Would you like to know your rights with respect to auto repairs?

Is it important to you to understand the basic mechanics behind your car?



YES!

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- Laws and obligations
- Basic mechanical overview

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Car emissions are down

(SOP) A study out of Southern California offers more evidence that the pollution control equipment on new vehicles is having an extremely positive effect on the environment.

An AAA study shows that, while the number of vehicles being driven on Southern California roads has more than doubled since 1965 and the average mileage they drive has increased, emissions the cars produce have been cut in half during the same period.

A typical new car in the 1960s produced 103 kilograms per year of reactive organic gases, while a typical new car in 1997 produces only about 2.7 kg per

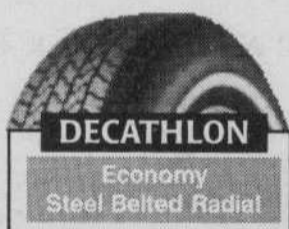
year due to improved emissions systems and other engineering and design advances by manufacturers.

"The greatest net improvements in air quality can be attributed to improvements in autos compared to any other source of air pollution," said Steve Mazor, the study's principal automotive engineer.

"Tailpipe emissions in a new car are so minuscule that if a person filling their car today spills one tablespoon of gasoline, the emissions from that tablespoon is the same as driving a typical car for about a day and-a-half," said Mazor.

Spring has sprung!

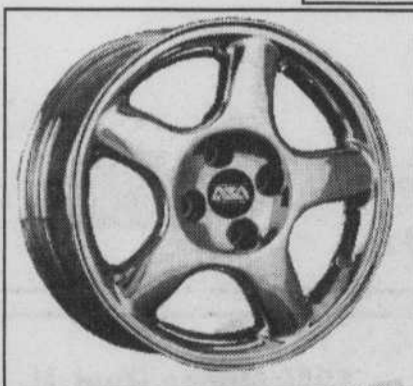
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