

Now's the time to get your auto in shape for warm weather to come

Having your car checked regularly is the best way to prevent major car problems down the road. A combination of getting your car in shape now, for the warm weather days ahead, and paying close attention to the warning signals your car gives to you and then acting accordingly, are key in assuring a car's smooth performance and long life.

How do you know when your car needs attention? Practice these suggestions offered by Car Care Council:

1. Watch to see if your engine is hard to start, uses gas excessively, is sluggish, smokes, or is excessively noisy.
2. Be sure that your cooling system is in good condition. The advent of more air weather could keep you at the tail end of those hot or other complaints. How long has it been since you checked your anti-freeze/coolant?
3. How about the condition of your tires? Heavy loads or high speeds on hot surfaces are hard on tires. In annual fall tune-ups, make sure tires have plenty of tread and are properly inflated.
4. How's your oil? Oil is not only a lubricant, it is a coolant as well. And clean, well-filtered oil will help your engine survive the heat.

5. Check your transmission. Days it slip when you shift gears? It's noisy? Does it shift erratically? For those who use a trailer, it is especially vital for your transmission to be in the best working order possible. Be sure that brakes stop evenly, and are not making any "tummy" noises.

6. Watch to see that lights are working and that they are focused correctly. Also check turning signals and windshield wipers for smearing or streaking.

Now that you've determined some of your car's problems, you will need to find a competent auto repair shop. If this task seems overwhelming, it doesn't have to. The National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) certifies technicians who have passed a series of tests to become ASE-certified. ASE is a non-profit organization that is highly respected in the automotive industry, as an independent, non-partisan group which gives voluntary certification to technicians.

Motorists can be assured of finding competent automotive service and repair by asking for ASE-certified technicians when visiting service stations, car dealerships and independent shops.

Businesses that employ ASE-certified technicians readily display the ASE-usage sign, a large white sign with a distinctive blue seal which are posted outside the store. A, S and E.

Even if your car is in top shape, safeguarding it from summer heat is very important. The most common complaint from summer drivers is that the heat affects a car's radiator, causing it to boil over. However, automotive experts believe that heat can affect the entire car, not just the radiator.

Tires that are "over-inflated" can become too stiff and are recommended air pressure is not maintained.

Soaking sunlight combined with pollutants and salt can damage a car's finish. Washing your car regularly is the best way to combat this problem.

Keeping your car in the best condition possible with regular checkups is the best way to assure a car's longevity, and the best way for you to enjoy a safe, happy spring and summer!

MOTORISTS CAN SAVE MONEY ON SELF-SERVE GAS BUT LOSE IT THROUGH NEGLIGENCE. SOX OF ALL DRIVERS SERIOUSLY NEGLECT CAR CHECKS AND MAINTENANCE. FUEL AND IGNITION SYSTEMS SUFFER MOST, BOTH AFFECT GAS MILEAGE.

IF YOU'RE A PUMP-IT-YOURSELFER, BUT NOT A CHECK-IT-YOURSELFER, GAS UP AT THE FULL-SERVICE PUMPS OCCASIONALLY AND ASK FOR A CHECK-UP.

CCC

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