

# Make Your Vehicle More Earth-Friendly

(MS) — Few social trends of the 21st century have been more popular and produced more positive results than the 'go green' movement. An effort to adopt a more environmentally friendly lifestyle, the go green movement is perhaps most prevalent in the automotive industry. More and more drivers are looking for

ways to conserve fuel and even considering hybrid cars as a means to being more mindful of the environment.

But even less drastic measures can make a big and positive impact on the environment. For instance, altering driving habits and taking good care of your existing vehicle

are easy ways to make a positive impact.

"Regular vehicle maintenance and better driving habits are two strategies that virtually every vehicle owner can embrace," says Martin Lawson of the National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE), a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the quality of automotive service and repair.

What's more, according to a survey of ASE-certified Master Auto Technicians, a well-maintained vehicle can last up to 50 percent longer than a poorly maintained counterpart. To help ensure your vehicle not only lasts longer but helps the environment along the way, ASE offers the following tips.

- Keep the engine

running at peak performance. A misfiring spark plug can reduce fuel efficiency as much as 30 percent and filters and fluids should be replaced in accordance with guidelines in your vehicle's manual.

- Keep tires properly inflated and aligned to reduce the engine's effort and conserve fuel.

- Find a good technician. Ask friends for recommendations or check the reputation of a given repair shop with your local consumer group. Check out any prospective technicians' credentials.

- Have your vehicle's air conditioner serviced only by a technician qualified to handle and recycle refrigerants. ASE-certified auto technicians have passed one or more national exams in specialties such as engine performance and air conditioning. Older air conditioners contain ozone-depleting chemicals, which could be released into the atmosphere

through improper service.

- Avoid gas-guzzling habits like speeding and sudden accelerations. When waiting for friends or family, shut off the engine, and do your best to consolidate daily errands to eliminate unnecessary driving.

- Remove excess items from the vehicle, since less weight means better mileage. Remove that rooftop luggage carrier after vacations to reduce air drag.

- If you do your own repairs, properly dispose of engine fluids and batteries. Some repair facilities accept these items. If you can't find one that does, call your local government for information.

Visit [www.ase.com](http://www.ase.com) for more seasonal car care tips and for information about the benefits of using ASE-certified technicians for auto repairs and service.



Driving while texting has become a major problem on the roadways.

## Distracted Driving A Big Danger

Today's drivers face more distractions than ever before. Technological gadgets from smart phones to MP3 players give drivers new reasons to look away from the road.

Distracted driving is any activity a person engages in that can distract him or her from the primary task of driving. There are three main types of distraction:

1. Visual: Taking eyes off the road.
2. Cognitive: Not thinking about what you're doing.
3. Manual: Taking hands off the wheel.

Distracted driving may include talking on a cell phone, eating food in the car, thumbing through the maps on a GPS device, or even changing the radio station. But the type of distracted driving that has become an epidemic, particularly among younger drivers, is texting while driving.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration says that 20 percent of injury crashes in 2009 involved reports of distracted driving. The age group with the greatest proportion of distracted drivers was the under-20 age group. As texting has become the preferred method of communication, a large percentage of automobile accidents might be due to texting.

When driving, the safest bet is to refrain from any activity that takes one's eyes, hands or mind away from the road. If answering a cell phone or working with another device is necessary, drivers should pull over to the side of the road and take care of what they need to do.



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