



Car Care: The Key to a Long-Lasting Vehicle

National Car Care Month in April is the time of year to give your car some extra attention. Basic car care is the key to a long-lasting vehicle, improving its safety and dependability, says the Car Care Council.

"Neglected vehicle care almost always means much higher costs down the line in the form of more extensive repairs or lost resale value," said Rich White, executive director, Car Care Council. "Following a routine maintenance program makes financial sense, extending useful vehicle life and helping avoid costly repairs down the road."

The Car Care Council recommends 10 basic maintenance procedures to keep your car operating at its best for the long haul:



1. **Check all fluids**, including engine oil, power steering, brake and transmission as well as windshield washer solvent and antifreeze/coolant.
2. **Check the hoses** and belts to make sure they are not cracked, brittle, frayed, loose or showing signs of excessive wear.
3. **Check the battery** and replace if necessary. Make sure the connection is clean, tight and corrosion-free.
4. **Check the brake system** annually and have the brake linings, rotors and drums inspected at each oil change.
5. **Inspect the exhaust system** for leaks, damage and broken supports or hangers if there is an unusual noise. Exhaust leaks can be dangerous and must be corrected without delay.
6. **Schedule a tune-up** to help the engine deliver the best balance of power and fuel economy and produce the lowest level of emissions.
7. **Check the heating, ventilating and air conditioning (HVAC) system** as proper heating and cooling performance is critical for interior comfort and for safety reasons such as defrosting.
8. **Inspect the steering and suspension system** annually including shock absorbers, struts and chassis parts such as ball joints, tie rod ends and other related components.
9. **Check the tires**, including tire pressure and tread. Uneven wear indicates a need for wheel alignment. Tires should also be checked for bulges and bald spots.
10. **Check the wipers and lighting** so that you can see and be seen. Check that all interior and exterior lighting is working properly and replace worn wiper blades so you can see clearly when driving during precipitation.

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Did you know?

A vehicle identification number, or VIN, is more than just a unique code that distinguishes a car from other vehicles. The VIN can actually tell drivers things about the car as well. By examining the VIN, a driver can learn where his or her car was assembled, the model year of the vehicle, the manufacturer of the vehicle and even the model of the vehicle. How to read a VIN is not something drivers learn in educational courses, so those who want to learn how to decode their VIN can contact the manufacturer of their vehicles. Understanding how to read a VIN can help car buyers determine if the car they are buying is stolen or if the seller is attempting to mislead them in another way. In addition, when drivers have the correct VIN number for a vehicle, they can use that to gain access to a vehicle history report on the car or truck. Such reports will indicate the vehicle's ownership and accident history, further protecting buyers from purchasing a lemon or stolen vehicle.

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■ PRESSURE, From Page ?

- manual is missing.
- Remove any debris surrounding the area you will be cleaning. This may include sticks, rocks, toys, and any other items that can be blown around with the pressure washer spray.
 - Use a safety harness if you will be using a pressure washer while on a ladder or elevated surface.
 - To lessen the chance of high-pressure injection (HPI), which is when water and other debris penetrates the skin resulting in deep-tissue damage, broaden the spray on the nozzle so it isn't piercing like a needle. HPI can cause infections so great that they may require amputation.
 - Use an extension cord that is water-resistant and acceptable for outdoor use. Ensure there are no breaks in the cord to minimize the chance for electrocution.
 - Avoid hot water and steam pressure washers to eliminate the chance for burns.
- Thousands of people are estimated to be hospitalized due to pressure-washer injuries. Many of these injuries can be prevented simply by heeding safety precautions and following the rules of operation.

- itself.
- Wear sturdy gloves with grips so you can have a firm hold on the nozzle while cleaning.
 - Be sure to read all of the safety precautions and operation instructions in the manual prior to operating the pressure washer. Do not use a washer if the instruction

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