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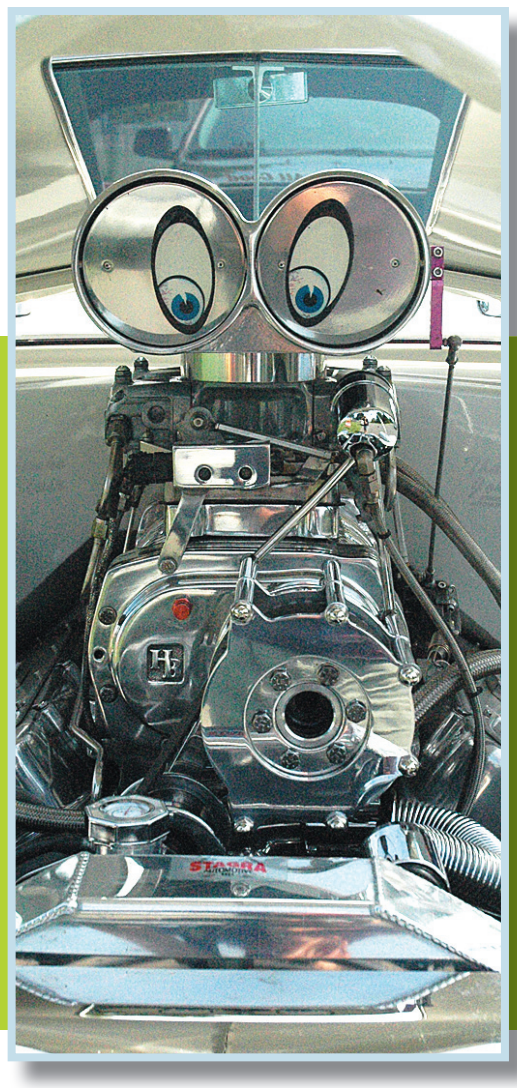
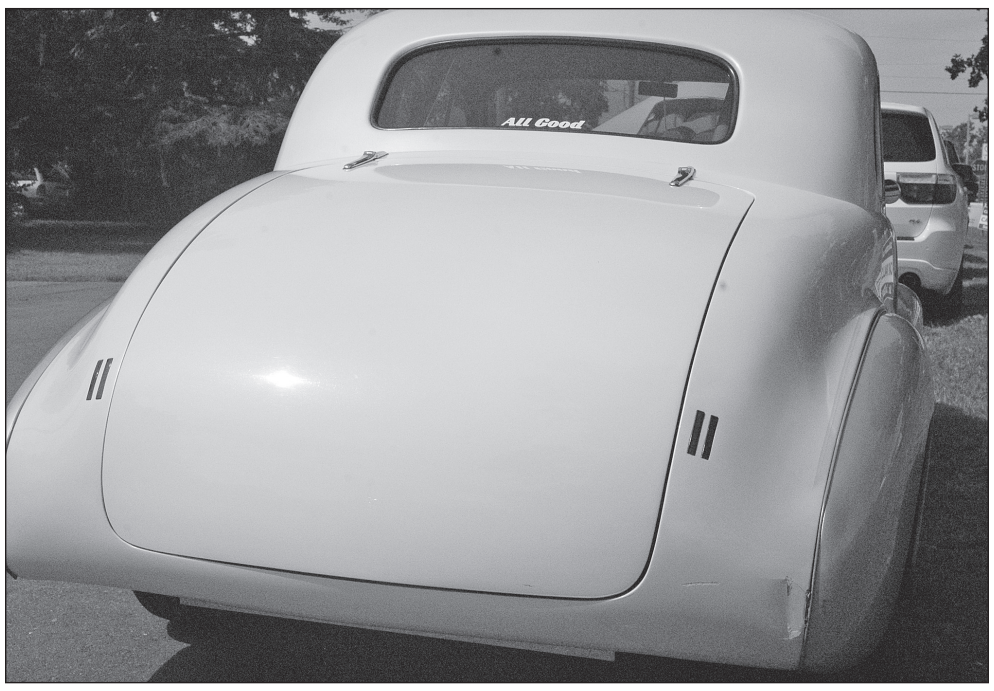






Al Graham's 1940 Chevy crusin' coupe… All Good





Press Photos – Van Bridger

METCALFE – The two words appearing on the rear window of Al Graham's 1940's Chevrolet five-window coupe sums up what his hot rod is all about – it's "All Good."

It doesn't matter that when Graham, founder and former owner of AJ's Catering, puts the pedal to the metal and does some doughnuts and burn outs with his sleek street rod that the fuel consumption falls to about one mile per gallon. Because, according to its owner, the car is to be driven for fun and to be enjoyed, because it's all good.

Graham, who founded the catering business as a 17-year-old and sold it two years ago at the age of 57, purchased his customized coupe in Halifax, Mass. three years ago and calls it a daily driver, in spite of it's 10-miles per gallon mileage rating.

"I have no trouble taking it on a five hour drive," he said. "It's when I have some fun with it and burn some rubber that the mileage goes way down."

The gas tank will hold 16 American gallons or 12 Canadian, but that doesn't impede its owner from turning the tires.

"I can easily burn a tank of gas without leaving town," he laughed. "But, that won't stop me from having fun."



Featured on our cover

The Chevy is powered by a 540 cubic inch big block that receives its fuel through an 871 Hampton blower topped with a pair of 750 Demon four-barrel carbs. The horsepower is transferred through a 4LR 80 automatic tranny and then on to the pavement through a set of 737 rear gears.

Graham installed an electric power steering system that makes handling easier without having to deal with a hose harness and pump.

The body was shaved, lowered, custom taillights installed, original chrome trim removed and a Cadillac pearl/Mercedes silver metallic paint scheme was applied. The interior, featuring bucket seats, is done in matching grey leather.

Because he is fully retired, Graham just doesn't tour around in his coupe. He is now a full-time volunteer. Always a strong supporter of the Metcalfe community and its special events, Graham has helped organize Shroomfest, is co-chairing Osgoode Township High School's 60th anniversary (May 23 - 25) and assisting in producing Osgoode Ward Councillor Doug Thompson's retirement party, to be held in September.

"I'm retired but still going, having fun and helping out," he added.

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Common misconceptions about fuel efficiency



Fuel efficiency is an important issue for car buyers, and understandably so. Conserving fuel is good for drivers' budgets and the planet, so the concept of fuel efficiency would seem to benefit everyone.

But just because fuel efficiency is a good concept does not mean there are not misconceptions about it among drivers and automotive professionals alike. The following are some of the more widely held misconceptions about fuel efficiency.

• **Full tanks conserve fuel.** Many people have long believed that a nearly full tank of gas means the fuel within that tank is less likely to evaporate, and that tanks that half-full tanks are losing gas to evaporation. Though this might have been the case years ago, today's vehicle's are smarter than ever before, and their fuel systems are designed with vapour recovery systems so drivers traveling around with tanks that are closer to empty than full aren't losing gas to evaporation.

• **Manual transmissions are more fuel efficient.** Technology can once again be credited with turning conventional wisdom on its head. In the past, manual transmission vehicles might have been more fuel efficient because drivers could more efficiently control engine revving with a five-speed manual transmission than they could with the standard three-speed automatic transmission. However, automatic transmissions have evolved over the years, and they are now more adept at controlling revs and conserving fuel than many drivers of manual transmission vehicles.

• **When you fill up matters.** Some drivers have long believed that filling up during the cooler hours of the day earns them more gas than filling up when the temperatures are at their peak. This theory traces its origins to the fact that liquids are at their most dense when they are cool. But today's filling stations store their gas in tanks beneath the ground, which is why you might see a tanker emptying its contents into the ground at the filling station. These underground tanks are insulated from temperature swings, so you aren't likely to receive any more gas by filling up in the morning than you will when filling up at night.

• **An old vehicle is destined to be less fuel efficient.** Any product that is allowed to fall into disrepair will prove less efficient than products that are well maintained, and cars are no exception. A poorly maintained car will not operate at peak fuel efficiency because it's likely being forced to work harder to get down the street than it would if it was well kept. But a well-maintained vehicle should not grow less fuel efficient over time.

• **Shifting into neutral while stopping saves gas.** This is another misconception that was once true but no longer applies thanks to advances in technology. When engines still had carburetors, shifting into neutral might have helped conserve fuel by stopping the flow of gas into the engine while the car was idling. However, fuel injection systems are now computerized and capable of sensing when an engine is revving above idle. This shuts off the fuel injectors, preventing gas from being injected into the engine and preventing gas from being wasted while the vehicle is stopped as a result.

Taking steps to conserve fuel is a good way for drivers to save money and benefit the environment. However, some of the conventional means to conserving fuel are no longer viable.



Bumper facelift

Catlin Boyer is pictured sanding a bumper at Winchester's D's Collision Center. The Dawley Drive shop is celebrating 25 years in business in 2014.

Press Photo – Casselman

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Tire maintenance an important safety precaution



Tires are the link between a vehicle and the roadway, and tire quality has a direct impact on the performance and safety of an automobile. But tire maintenance is easy to overlook. However, ignoring tire maintenance can threaten driver and passenger safety and make a vehicle operate inefficiently.

Steering, breaking ability, and traction are all governed by good tires. Worn tread can result in longer stopping times and make it difficult to brake immediately in an emergency situation. Although driving tends to be the primary culprit behind worn down tires, sometimes bald or unevenly worn out tread is indicative of a larger problem, such as a misaligned wheelbase, improperly aligned tires or tires that are underinflated. The following are some common problems associated with tires and how to address these issues should they arise.

Blowouts

Worn tire treads increase the risk of punctures, which can lead to blowouts. Bald tires also may blowout as a result of friction on roadways that is met with minimal rubber. Getting caught on the side of the road with a tire blowout can be a hassle, so routinely check tire treads and replace tires accordingly.

Tread depth

Average new tires on cars usually start with 10/32 inch to 11/32 inch of original tread depth. When tread reaches a depth of 2/32 inch, they are considered worn out. Look at the treadwear indicator bar molded into the tires. When these bars become flush with the adjacent ribs of the tire, the tires should be replaced.

Alignment

According to the Rubber Manufacturers Association, improper alignment causes rapid or uneven treadwear. Tires should be aligned and balanced periodically to avoid irregular wear and having to replace tires prematurely.

Tread pattern

Tires feature different tread patterns depending on the brand of tire. They may be directional, asymmetrical, nondirectional, and directional/asymmetrical. When purchasing replacement tires, it is advisable to match the tread pattern to the existing tires. This helps enhance the performance of the car. In fact, some newer cars require tread to match. Mismatched treads may cause problems with transmission shifting or impact control and steadiness.

Tire pressure

Underinflation of tires can cause failure, stress and irregular wear. Underinflated tires may also contribute to loss of control that leads to accidents. Always maintain the manufacturer's recommendations for the correct pressure, which should be adjusted based on the temperature.

Tires should undergo the same inspection and maintenance as other parts of the vehicle. Tires are a vital component to safe driving, and routine maintenance can prevent accidents and other problems.



Spring control

Shane Buske of D&J Motors in Winchester is pictured putting a spring on a strut.

Press Photo – Casselman

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What to do when faced with an auto recall

New cars are purchased to provide a reliable mode of transportation. But sometimes manufacturers or safety watchdog groups determine that certain cars and trucks have an issue that requires a recall to keep roadways safe. Vehicle recall statistics are difficult to pin down. That's because there is no standard rate of recalls per year, as recalls depend on safety statistics for particular makes and models. For example, in 2009 more than 40 million Toyota vehicles were recalled due to a faulty gas pedal.

An automotive recall is how manufacturers inform drivers that there could be something about their cars or trucks that presents a risk of injury or property damage. The recall involves the manufacturer providing a free, safe and effective remedy for the faulty component.

When a recall is announced, drivers may not have to immediately visit a dealership to have the problem corrected. Owners should wait for an official letter. The letter will narrow down which vehicles are affected. There should be a specific window of time presented in which the vehicle can be repaired. Vehicle owners are urged to pay attention to the performance of their cars or trucks to see if they are exhibiting any problems. If so, schedule an appointment for repair according to the recall instructions provided.

The notification letter should include the risk of hazard posed by the problem as well as the free remedy and how long the repair should take. There also should be a description of what an owner can do if he or she is unable to have the problem remedied within a reasonable amount of time and without charge.

If repair work has been done on a vehicle prior to knowledge of the recall, owners may be eligible for reimbursement for their expenses, provided they kept their receipts. While reimbursement for damages that the defect may have caused are not covered by recalls, owners may be able to solicit reimbursement privately.

The following are steps to take when informed of a recall:

1. Contact the dealer service manager and explain that you are inquiring about work required as part of a recall.

2. If the manager has not remedied the situation and provided the next steps, contact the manufacturer, which should be able to handle the situation.

3. If all else fails contact Transport Canada at www.tc.gc.ca.



Engine diagnosis

Following up on a customer's engine light concern, Troy Wilson, owner of Troy Wilson Automotive in Williamsburg, performed a diagnostic check on the vehicle.

Press Photo – Casselman

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Stick shifts are not always what they seem

Many auto enthusiasts prefer stick shifts, or manual transmissions, over automatic transmissions. Such supporters of stick shifts tend to feel as though a manual transmission engages drivers in ways that an automatic one simply cannot, making stick shifts more fun to drive than the more staid, automatic alternatives.

While the fun factor associated with manual transmission vehicles may be difficult to dispute, there are other commonly held beliefs about stick shifts that are far easier to contest. The following are a few things about today's manual transmission vehicles that might surprise even the most ardent automotive enthusiasts.

• **Manual transmission vehicles are not necessarily cheaper than automatic transmission vehicles.** Stick shifts are often less expensive than automatics, but that's not always the case, and certain manufacturers, including BMW, tend to charge the same price for their vehicles regardless of which type of transmission buyers choose. In the past, manual transmissions were almost always a less expensive option than automatic transmissions because they were easier for manufacturers to install, which enabled automakers to cut back on labour costs, and those savings were passed along to consumers. While that difference in sticker price might once have been significant, nowadays it is often negligible, meaning buyers won't necessarily save substantial amounts of money by opting for a stick shift.

• **Stick shifts are not readily available in all models.** As the popularity of manual transmission vehicles has waned, so, too, has their availability. According to Edmunds.com, 67 percent of 2013 model-year vehicles were offered only with automatic transmissions. While it might be possible for buyers to still purchase such vehicles with manual transmissions, that opportunity is not guaranteed. Even if it is available, buyers will likely have to pay a premium price to order such custom-made automobiles, and it takes longer to deliver such vehicles than it does when buyers simply buy a car already on the lot.

• **Stick shifts may not be expensive to maintain.** Some drivers of manual transmission vehicles like to bemoan the costs of replacing the clutch on their vehicles, and that raises some concern among buyers considering a stick shift. But skilled stick shift drivers need not be worried about constantly replacing the clutch, which tends to be most in need of replacement when novice drivers struggle to get the hang of a manual transmission. In addition, manual transmissions are often much less expensive to replace than automatic transmissions. Also, skilled stick shift drivers who can deftly downshift often note the positive long-term effect that such a practice has on their brake pads and rotors, which can last considerably longer on vehicles with manual transmissions than those with automatic ones.

• **Stick shifts may not repel car thieves or cost less to insure.** Because vehicles with manual transmissions require more skill to drive than automatics, some feel as though this deters car thieves, who may not know how to drive stick shifts. But there is no evidence to support this theory, nor any evidence to dispute it. And while those who subscribe to this theory feel that manual transmissions are therefore cheaper to insure because they are at a decreased risk of being stolen, that is also untrue. While the standards used to determine the price of an insurance policy vary between providers, many insurance providers view manual transmission vehicles as more risky because they take longer to shift, stop and accelerate. But manual transmissions also are less expensive to repair, and insurance companies consider that as well when determining the cost of a policy. Such factors may cancel each other out, and drivers will be left with an insurance policy that's roughly the same as if the vehicle included an automatic transmission.

The demand for manual transmission vehicles continues to shrink, and there are things drivers should know about such automobiles before driving one home.

How to get the best rate on a car loan

Many consumers get so caught up in finding the lowest price possible for a vehicle that they fail to give sufficient thought to finding a good rate on the loan to buy that vehicle.

Many consumers finance their vehicle purchases, meaning they must apply for a loan. Finding the best rate possible can reduce the cost of vehicle ownership considerably. Research is any consumer's best friend, especially when buying an automobile, and understanding the market and the interest rates available can save drivers substantial amounts of money. Here's how to secure the best interest rate possible.

• **Begin by requesting a copy of your credit report.** Review the information and address any issues or inconsistencies that may be negatively affecting your credit score. Banks use credit scores to determine prospective borrowers' credit worthiness. A poor credit history can negatively influence purchasing power.

• **Determine a budget to figure out what is affordable.** Lower the interest rate by shortening the duration of the loan. A longer loan term generally carries with it a higher interest rate. If it is possible to put down more money and reduce the length of the loan, you can earn a smaller interest rate, paying less over the life of the loan.

• **Shop around with various lenders to see if you can get a better deal.** While dealerships may offer financing specials, they are not always the least expensive bet. Banks or credit unions may offer lower rates to their account holders. Investigate all possibilities and get at least three loan quotes before making a decision.

• **Purchasing a new car may pay off in terms of a lower loan rate.** Very often financing packages are offered on new vehicles, including zero percent rates as introductory rates or over the duration of the loan.

• **Keep credit unions in mind.** According to Consumer Reports, credit unions have low operating costs because of their nonprofit status. As a result, their lending rates can be quite competitive. Many people belong to credit unions just to take advantage of the convenient loan policies.

• **Buy a car you can afford.** You will pay less by financing a lower-priced vehicle. Purchase the car you need, but make sure it's a car you can afford as well.

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More power

Once again senior students in Andrew Whitton's North Dundas District High School Transportation Technology class are demonstrating their ingenuity, creativity and technical skills throughout an in-class project. Jake Thurler (left), Kyle Oosterhof and Sam Sternberg are part of a team re-creating a 2005 Chrysler Crossfire by replacing the original Mercedes 3.2LL V6 and a six speed manual transmission with a donated GM LS 5.3L V8 coupled to a 1970's style TH350 automatic transmission (pictured). The students are also manufacturing engine mounts, exhaust headers, transmission brackets, a driveshaft and a gas pedal (car original driven by wire). Whitton said the project includes a means to make the ignition coils fire and adding a new fuel delivery system.

Press Photo – Van Bridger



Ready for spring

Andrew Whitton's Grade 10 Transportation Technology class has been reviving well-used lawn tractors, discarded for various mechanical deficiencies, as personal projects. Having completed their required rebuild of both four and two stroke engines, the North Dundas District High School students are applying their knowledge repairing carburetors, ignition systems and removing several rodent's nests to get the riders running again. The students then expanded their assignments by making modifications to the drive and exhaust systems, which tripled the machines' speed. The mower modifiers include: Sjoerd Sterkenburgh (left), Jakob Downey, Shane Rodney (seated), Kyle Backes, Owen Helmer, Ben Schoones, Jared Schoenfeld, Cole Lake, Tyson Sherrer (seated), Noah Thom, Clint St. Louis, Ben Roberts, Sawyer Vanden Bosch (seated).

Press Photo – Van Bridger

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Learn to tow cargo safely



The size and weight of a trailer and the cargo it's towing must be considered before embarking on a trip.

Warm weather is on the horizon, and people from all over are preparing their vehicles for another season of road trips. In addition to packing the interior cargo areas full of equipment and luggage, many road-trippers also haul gear and recreational accessories with them.

There's more to towing than hitching a trailer and hitting the open road. A number of factors come into play when towing cargo or another vehicle, including the towing capacity of the vehicle doing the hauling. The following are some safety tips for road trippers hitting the road with trailer in tow.

Tow vehicles

While many vehicles have towing capabilities, not all of those vehicles are necessarily right for the job. Review the towing capacities of various vehicles depending on the type of trailer that will be towed. A larger, more powerful vehicle may be necessary if you will be towing something large and heavy, such as a boat or a recreational vehicle. You may need more horsepower to maintain a safe driving speed when towing especially heavy cargo.

Equipment

Different manufacturers offer towing packages equipped to work in concert with your vehicle. Towing packages may include certain types of hitches, batteries, flasher systems, extended-view side mirrors, and even special axles and tires. In many areas, a trailer with a loaded weight of more than 1,500 pounds requires a separate braking system and a breakaway switch located on the tongue of the trailer that activates the trailer brakes in the event it separates from the tow vehicle. Having the right equipment can mean the difference between safely towing cargo and getting in an accident.

Ability

Having a lot of power and the right equipment is not enough to safely tow cargo. Recklessness on the road, which includes driving over the speed limit, is a recipe for an accident. It typically takes time and some practice for drivers to grow accustomed to driving while towing cargo. Driving while towing cargo requires that drivers manoeuvre their vehicles differently than they would in more typical conditions, and that they drive at slower speeds while leaving room for a larger turning radius. In addition, drivers must accommodate for the extra weight when braking.

Vehicle check

Verifying that the trailer hitch is secure is not the only inspection drivers must conduct before hitting the open road. The vehicle doing the towing should be serviced, and any repairs should be made. Check fluid levels, particularly the transmission fluid. In addition, make sure the water level in the battery is acceptable and have the motor oil changed if it is nearing its mileage limit. It's also a good idea to replace the air filter, examine the tires for adequate tread and test the brakes.

When the trip begins, give your vehicle and the hitch a once-over to double-check that everything is in working order. This can be done during service station stops along the trip.

Spring is a season of recreational fun and long road trips, but it pays to play it safe when towing gear and other cargo.

Things to consider before buying a recreational vehicle

Opportunity for adventure abounds for recreational vehicle owners. With a motor home parked in the driveway, a road trip or instant family getaway is only a few steps away.

While RVs can be rented, serious road-trippers often prefer purchasing one so that it can be customized with the features desired and always be at the ready. RVs vary in price depending on the vehicle, and there are a few thing prospective RV owners should know before they begin shopping.

First and foremost, drivers who have not previous owned an RV or even stepped inside of one may have an inaccurate perception of these vehicles. Today's recreational vehicles are much more than meets the eye, and it pays to attend an RV show to become acquainted with the various types of motor homes. This way you will be familiar with the jargon and have a reasonable idea of what you want before going to a dealership.

There are various classes of RVs, but the largest ones tend to be the most expensive. Some RVs have an engine and are driven like a bus, while other models hitch to the back of a truck or van. If you will be towing an RV, you must be certain the car or truck doing the towing is equipped to tow a vehicle the weight and size of your particular RV.

Some RVs have fixed dimensions, while others expand, either manually or electronically, pushing out walls to provide even more interior room when the RV is parked. RVs have different floor plans, and there are many different models to fit a buyer's needs.

Many RVs are equipped with no frills furnishings, but there are models that feature top-of-the-line appliances and fixtures. It's possible to get granite countertops and cherry cabinets in an RV, but such accessories will increase the cost of the vehicle. Upholstered sofas and dining room banquettes may be upgraded to leather. Some RVs have an additional kitchenette built into the exterior of the unit for easy access when barbecuing or cooking at a campsite.

How you plan to use the RV should also be considered prior to purchasing one. Will you be spending time cooking meals and sleeping inside, or will it mainly be used as a storage unit for your camping gear? Do you plan on taking extended vacations and desire all the comforts of home? Defining these goals will help you find the right RV for you.

Another thing to consider is renting an RV for a day or two to get a feel for driving it and what it is like to spend a night inside. You may be able to determine if you need more or less of a mobile home when you ultimately decide to purchase.

Make sure everything works before you drive the RV off of the lot. Repairs can be expensive, and you do not want to be stuck with a lemon when you're on the road. Find out if there are any roadside assistance packages that can be negotiated to offer you peace of mind with your first RV.

The decision of whether or not to purchase an RV requires ample forethought. Comparing a number of different models and designs and weighing personal needs can give buyers a good idea of which RV is right for them.

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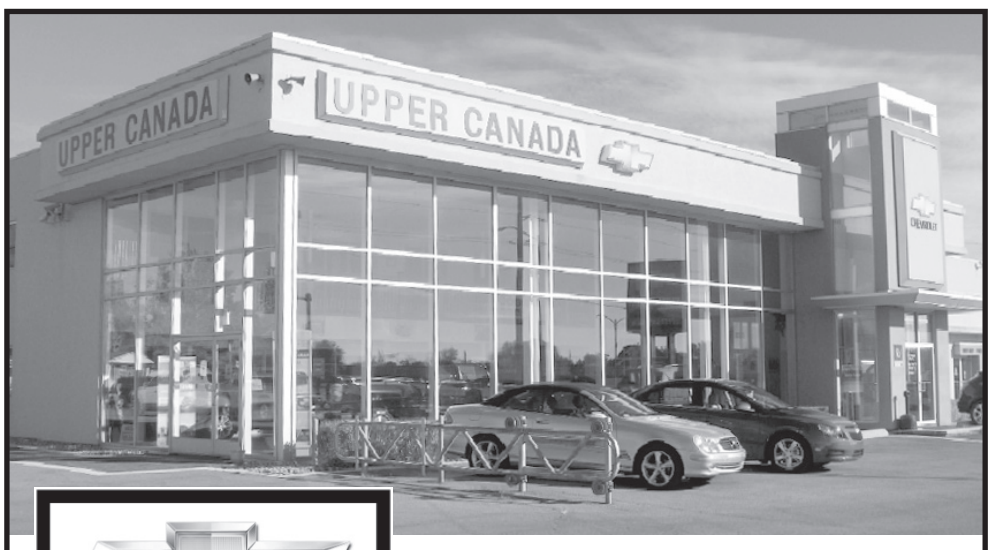

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When buying from a dealer, the odometer reading must be indicated on the sale sticker; if the reading is unknown this must also be indicated on the sticker. The sticker must also inform consumers that they can obtain the name and phone number of the previous owner. Contact the previous owner to confirm the odometer reading.

Odometer fraud cheats car buyers

Purchasing a used vehicle carries some risks. A used car buyer may not know the complete history of the vehicle or if any shortcuts were taken regarding its maintenance. One increasingly common problem preowned vehicle buyers are running into is odometer fraud.

Consumers are estimated to lose billions of dollars due to odometer fraud, according to The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Odometer tampering is a serious crime that can fool buyers into believing a vehicle has far fewer miles on it than it really does. Sellers are able to fraudulently market cars and trucks at higher prices based on lower odometer readings. People also may able to circumvent mileage quotas on leased vehicles by turning back the odometer.

While older cars had to have the odometer dial turned back by machine or manually, today's digital dashboards enable crooks to reprogram digital odometers using inexpensive software. Many consumers do not learn of odometer fraud until it is too late.

Digital odometer fraud is difficult to detect because there are no moveable parts that can appear manipulated. Much like a hacked computer is often discovered too late, so, too, is a tampered odometer. However, there are some steps consumers can take to protect themselves from odometer fraud.

• **Compare the mileage** on the odometer to the mileage listed on maintenance or inspection records. Check oil-change stickers on windows as well.

• **Look for inconsistent wear and tear on the vehicle** compared to the miles on the odometer. An older car will have wear on the gas, break and clutch pedals. A vehicle with fewer than 20,000 miles should have its original tires.

• **Check the mileage listed on the title with the odometer.** If the mileage notation is hard to read, this may indicate fraud.

• **Request a vehicle history report** to determine whether odometer rollback took place. This will match up the mileage reading according to the VIN number.

• **If the guage on a mechanical odometer is crooked** or misaligned, this may indicate tampering.

Odometer tampering is illegal. If the vehicle was sold with an altered odometer, the dealer or private seller could be liable. If others are responsible, it is the sellers' responsibility to locate them. Unfortunately, rollbacks are usually done by a third party, removed enough from the seller as not to incriminate the person. This frequently makes prosecution difficult. It is up to the buyer to take proactive steps to avoid odometer fraud.

Stretch dollars on your next road trip

In an era of escalated airline ticket prices and extra travel expenses, road trips have emerged once more as a popular and cost-conscious mode of vacationing for individuals and families.

Fodor's Travels advises taking road trips across Canada in the summer, when temperatures average 23 degrees Celsius and snow and slush are a distant memory. Various trips exist that can take you through urban or rural areas.

Those making road trips may be concerned about keeping costs down, particularly if saving money is the catalyst behind the road trip vacation. The following are a few tips to stretch dollars that much further on your next road trip.

• **Dine out sparingly.** Road stops and drive-thru food expenditures can quickly add up during the course of a road trip. Therefore, pack the majority of the food you will eat in a cooler. Not only will this save money, it will mean food is at the ready when hunger strikes. Food need not be all cold snacks, like sandwiches. Frozen burgers or refrigerated frankfurters can be cooked on a camp stove or tossed on a grill at a park's picnic area. Save restaurant dining as a special treat during the vacation.

• **Look for inexpensive lodging.** While on a road trip you may need to compromise some of the comforts of home to save some money. Motel rates are another trip budget-buster. But by mixing overnights at motels with less expensive options you may be able to mitigate costs. Spend a few nights under the stars at campgrounds; just be sure you have the right gear. Some also like to plan road trip routes between where relatives live and make pit stops at a friend or family member's home. When seeking motels, try to bargain and see if you're eligible for any rebates or coupons due to age or military status.

• **Map out cheaper gas stations.** Today's smartphones have apps that enable you to find nearby gas stations. Such apps may even shed light on which filling stations offer the best prices on gasoline.

• **Don't speed.** In addition to being illegal, speeding wastes gas. Stick to the speed limit to avoid potentially costly tickets and improve fuel efficiency.

• **Bring friends along.** Friends will not only make the trip more fun, but they also can take turns driving and sharing the costs of the excursion.

• **Join a roadside assistance club.** Vehicle problems are inevitable if you are a frequent road-tripper who's driving an older car. Avoid potentially costly towing costs by joining a roadside assistance club that will pay for your vehicle to be towed if necessary.

• **Have the proper paperwork.** Keep a current copy of your car registration, license and proof of insurance with you on a road trip. This makes it much easier to deal with traffic stops along the way. Individuals and their passengers planning on visiting another country should have their passports available and follow the laws regarding bringing food or goods over the border to avoid fines.

Road trips can be enjoyable excursions that cost far less than other vacations. Road-trippers can stretch funds even further with some handy tips.

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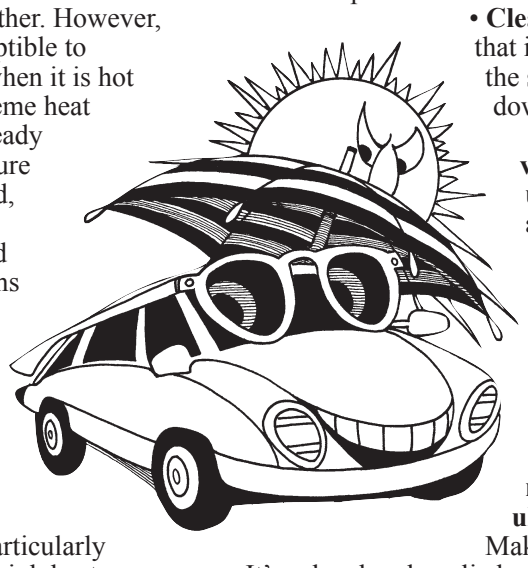
Protect vehicles in hot conditions

Dramatic fluctuations in temperature can wreak havoc on automobiles. While cars and trucks are designed to be reliable under various conditions, sometimes the weather can get the best of even the most reliable vehicle.

Many people associate car troubles with cold weather. However, cars are susceptible to breakdowns when it is hot outside. Extreme heat adds to an already high temperature under the hood, requiring ventilation and cooling systems to work that much harder. Batteries, alternators, starters, fan motors, and cooling systems are particularly vulnerable to high heat. It's easy for a car to overheat and breakdown.



Proper maintenance and some hot weather guidelines can keep drivers safe and on the road when temperatures soar, whether drivers are going on a quick ride or an extended road trip.

• **Be sure the radiator is working properly** and is filled with fluid at all times. This helps prevent overheating, which can strand a vehicle on the side of the road.

• **Hot temperatures cause items to expand,** such as the air molecules inside of the tires. Make sure the tires are properly inflated so blowouts do not occur.

• **Keep up-to-date with oil changes** and other routine maintenance. Vehicles that are well maintained are less likely to be susceptible to heat strain.

• **Proper air flow is essential to cool an engine** and keep a vehicle air conditioning system operating efficiently. If the cooling system has not recently been serviced, have it done before the hot weather arrives.

• **Replace an old battery, and top off a functioning battery** with distilled water when necessary, particularly if evaporation has occurred.

• **Clean the vehicle** so that it will better reflect the sun's rays, cutting down on radiant heat.

• **When the vehicle is parked, use a car cover or a reflective shade** in the windshield to protect the interior from sun damage and excessive heat.

• **Tinted windows can help block out more of the sun's ultraviolet rays.** Make sure that tint is legal and applied properly if it is done after-market.

• **Plan road trips for early in the morning** or late at night to cut down on the amount of time spent driving during the peak heat and sunshine.

• **Passengers should wear appropriate clothing and apply sunscreen.** Car windows do not block UV light, and passengers may be susceptible to sunburn even when they're in the car.

• **Park in the shade whenever possible.**

• **Never leave children or pets unattended in a vehicle,** even for short moments.

• **If the temperature gauge inside of the car reads hot, pull over,** open the hood and turn the heat on inside the car to expel some of the pent-up heat.

• **Keep plenty of water on hand** in the event of a breakdown to prevent dehydration until help arrives.

Don't lose money when leasing

Leasing instead of buying a vehicle has its benefits. Drivers who lease often cite the fun of getting a new car every few years and the peace of mind of knowing they won't have to deal with costly repairs associated with older vehicles as two of the best reasons to lease a vehicle. While leases make practical sense for many drivers, the leasing process can be tricky to navigate. The following are a few things drivers should know before signing a new agreement.

• **Avoid high down payments.** Though many drivers are attracted to leasing because the monthly payments are typically much less expensive than they would if drivers financed a vehicle, such drivers should know that those low monthly payments are often accompanied by hefty down payments, sometimes as much as several thousand dollars at the time the lease is signed. But such hefty down payments can prove problematic if the car is damaged or stolen. In such instances, the insurance company is likely to reimburse the leasing agency for the value of the car, but not the driver. So the driver might be out his or her down payment and be left without a car. That's why it's beneficial for men and women leasing a vehicle to keep their down payments to a minimum, and ideally make no down payment at all. This will increase your monthly payment, but you will have the peace of mind of knowing you won't be out several thousand dollars should the car be wrecked or stolen during the lease.

• **Purchase gap insurance.** Another financial concern for lessees is what happens if the car is totaled or stolen. In such instances, the insurance company will reimburse the leasing agent for the value of the car at the time of the accident or theft, but drivers might still be on the hook for the total obligation of the lease. That means the value reimbursed to the leasing company will be subtracted from the remaining balance on the lease, and drivers will still be responsible for paying the difference. The only way drivers can protect themselves in such instances is to purchase gap insurance, which will cover the difference should the car be wrecked or stolen. Some leasing contracts already include gap insurance, but drivers should confirm this before signing the agreement.

• **Buy extra miles in advance.** Leases come with mileage restrictions, and an agreement that comes with an especially low monthly payment will often stipulate that drivers cannot exceed 12,000 miles per year over the life of the lease. If you exceed that limit, the agreement might charge you as much as 25 cents per mile over the limit, which can add up to a considerable amount of money depending on how many miles over that limit you go. If you know you are likely to exceed 12,000 miles per year, buy extra miles before signing the agreement. This won't cost you money up front, but rather will lead to a slightly higher monthly payment.

• **Don't sign an agreement that's too long.** The benefit of leasing is that you aren't still driving the car when it starts to exhibit the wear and tear that is inevitable with older vehicles. So drivers should limit the terms of their lease to two or three years, a period during which the vehicle will still be under warranty. Once the warranty has expired, it's time for lessees to move on to another vehicle. If your lease terms are more than three years, consider purchasing an extended warranty to cover the remaining years of the lease. But in general it's best to limit leases to three years or less, when the car is unlikely to need repairs.

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Rebuilding brakes

Evan Schmidt, above, was hard at work rebuilding the brakes on a large truck at Precision Diesel in Winchester.

Getting bearings

Doug Kelly (right), owner of Kelly's Garage and Tow in Winchester, was in the middle of replacing a wheel bearing.

Getting vehicles Road-Ready for spring





Laser alignment

While closely monitoring the laser lineup machine at Winchester's W.J.L. Boyd & Sons, John Montgomery made adjustments to the wheel alignment on this vehicle.

Press Photos – Casselman

Demand for diesel vehicles increasing

Today's diesel vehicles have been redesigned and reimagined, making them a growing commodity for buyers. While diesel cars and trucks were once the relative outcasts of the automotive consumer market, diesel passenger vehicles are now the centre of newfound demand.



Diesel cars are becoming more popular among consumers.

One of the main draws of diesel cars and trucks is their fuel economy. Consumers focused on saving money and protecting the planet concurrently often find that diesel vehicles are more fuel efficient than vehicles that run on regular unleaded gasoline. Although diesel costs more at the pump than other fuels, drivers who fuel up with diesel gasoline can save around 30 percent through improved fuel efficiency over regular gasoline. That can add up to considerable savings over time.

Why are diesels more efficient?

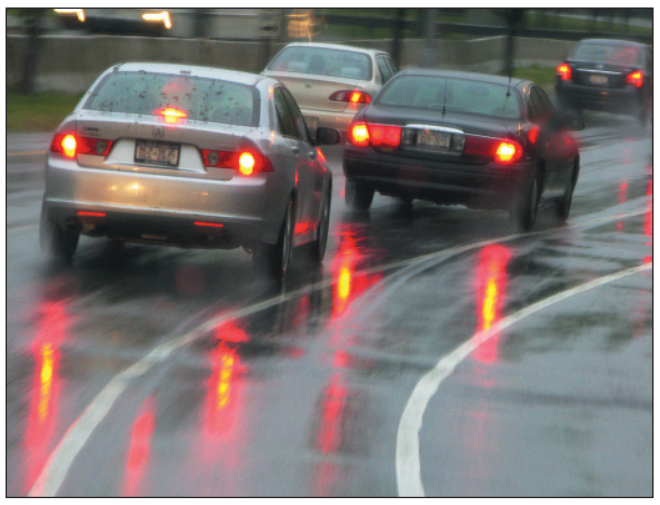
Diesel engines are more efficient than gasoline engines. Higher compression ratios than gasoline produce ultra-high temperatures that will ignite fuel injected directly into the cylinder head, according to BMW. Diesel vehicles are equipped to use more of the energy content of the fuel to produce output than vehicles that run on regular unleaded gasoline. It takes less fuel to provide the same power as standard gasoline.

In the past, diesel cars were associated with black, sooty exhaust and clanking engines. However, today's modern diesel cars are quiet and burn fuel more cleanly due to new technology. Although diesel vehicles have been popular in Europe for a while, they have not been very appealing in North America. Things are starting to change.

German-based Volkswagen, BMW, Mercedes-Benz, and Audi have a history of offering an extensive range of diesel-powered vehicles in the American market. Recognizing the demand for diesel cars and trucks, Chevrolet/GMC, Ford and Jeep are now offering diesel vehicles that they hope will attract a new legion of customers.

Diesel-fueled cars have evolved through the years to be vehicles that can rival gasoline-powered automobiles on the roads. With superior fuel economy, diesel vehicles may one day surpass the number of gasoline vehicles.





Tips when driving in rainy conditions

Rainy weather can arrive any time of year. While an afternoon spent indoors watching the drops fall can be relaxing, driving in the rain is anything but. It requires extra concentration and improved reaction time. Rainy conditions can be challenging and treacherous, and drivers should proceed with caution on rain-slicked roads.

Rain is blamed for many accidents, but many of these situations are largely preventable among drivers who adapt to the weather and roadway conditions. Here are some things to consider.

• **Reduced visibility occurs from wiper blades, glare (particularly at night) and heavy downpours.** When you are unable to see the road ahead, including other vehicles, reduce your speed. If the rain is coming down in torrents, pull over to the side of the road and wait for a respite. Turn on your lights to ensure you are visible to other cars on the road.

• **Recognize that rain can cause slick conditions.** A film of water develops on the roadways, and that can affect the performance of your vehicle's tires. Less traction means the car can slip and slide. Hydroplaning, or coasting on the surface of the water, is common. Another, lesser-known condition is slickness caused by grease and oil in the asphalt. During a long dry spell, these substances build up on the roads. When it rains, the oil and water doesn't mix, bringing the oils to the surface and exacerbating slick conditions. The first few hours of a rainstorm can be quite dangerous until heavier rains wash the oils away.

• **Water spraying up onto tires and brakes can compromise braking ability.** That means it could take longer to stop under wet conditions. Do not tailgate and leave extra room between vehicles. If you drive through a puddle of water, pump the brakes and test them out to be sure you can stop. Brake earlier so that other drivers understand your intentions and can react accordingly.

• **Avoid extremely large puddles.** First of all, you cannot judge the depth of the puddle and you may end up getting stuck, especially in the event of roadway flooding. Water splashing into the engine compartment may damage electrical components. Steer around puddles to be on the safe side.

• **Use extra care watching out for pedestrians.** A normally observant person may be distracted by the rain, puddles and wrangling an umbrella and veer into the path of cars. Be mindful of the side of the roads and where pedestrians may be, such as around parked cars.

• **Change wiper blades twice per year.** You do not want to be caught with shoddy wiper blades in poor conditions. Without an effective wiper blade, rain cannot be cleared effectively from the windshield.

• **Limit distractions inside of the car to focus even more of your attention on the road.** It illegal for drivers to talk, text, type, dial or email using hand-held cell phones and other hand-held communications and entertainment devices. While some have become accustomed to answering phone calls with hands-free devices or fielding questions from the backseat while driving, avoid such distractions when driving in the rain. Turn down the radio and encourage passengers to remain quiet until safely home.

• **Leave extra time to get to your destination.** Rain causes slowing down of traffic. Rushing may increase your risk of being in an accident, so always leave extra travel time when driving in wet conditions.

• **Make way for emergency personnel.** Accidents and bad weather are common. Slow down or pull over to allow emergency vehicles to pass by. If there are flashing lights on the side of the road, move into the left lane to give a wide girth around first responders.

Driving in the rain requires drivers to exercise caution. Making a few adjustments improves safety on the roadways.

Mechanical know-how

Working on this car's upper intake manifold, Winchester Automotive Services' Bob Fetterly (right) showed apprentice Kyle Buell how to replace the detonation sensor.

Press Photo – Casselman



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