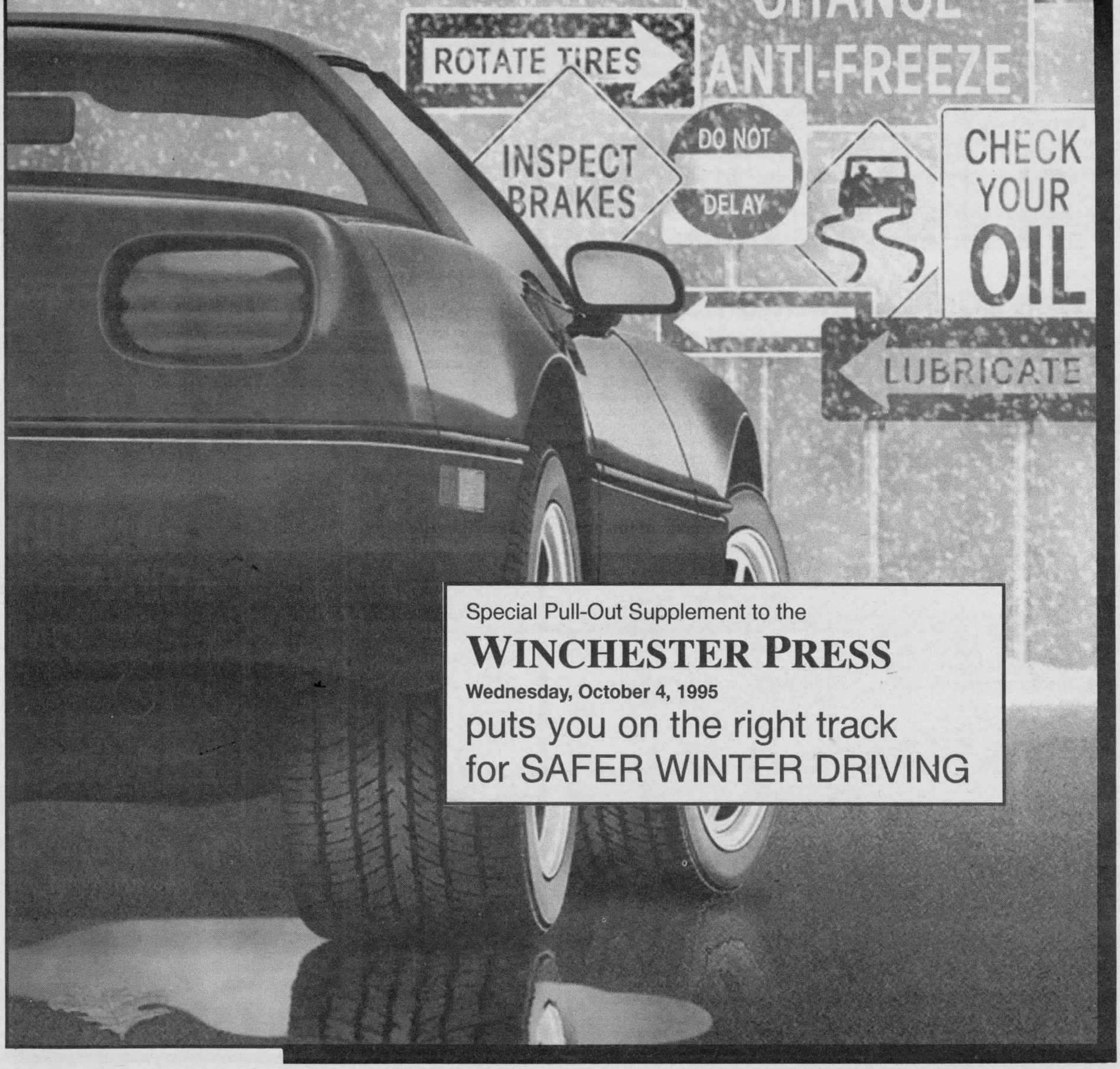
FALL/WINTER CAR CARE



Special Pull-Out Supplement to the

WINCHESTER PRESS

Wednesday, October 4, 1995

puts you on the right track
for SAFER WINTER DRIVING

What's a tune-up involve?

(CCC)—New car commercials feature 100,000-mile intervals between recommended tune-ups. Most cars would be in pretty bad shape if their owners waited that long.

When a typical car goes into the shop for a complete tune-up, a service generally required every 30,000 miles or every two or three years, what services should be included? Electric ignition, computerized engine controls and electronic fuel injection have eliminated many of the adjustments that once were part of a traditional tune-up.

One of the main reasons people take their vehicles into their technician for a tune-up is because they are experiencing a "driveability" problem: starting, stalling, hesitation on acceleration, poor gas mileage or lack of power. These symptoms in today's complex engines require a comprehensive diagnostic check.

Following are 17 items usually included in a complete tune-up. The list may vary according to vehicle and/or the shop providing the service, but it's a handy reference for owners seeking quality service.

1. Replace spark plugs.
2. Check the distributor cap and replace if necessary.
3. Check ignition timing and adjust if necessary.
4. Check ignition wires and replace if necessary.
5. Check ignition performance (firing voltage/ignition patterns).
6. Check engine idle speed and adjust if necessary.
7. Check the choke mechanism (on engines with carburetors).
8. Clean fuel injectors.*
9. Check compression and/or power balance (to identify bad injectors as well as compression problems).
10. Check manifold intake vacuum to reveal exhaust restrictions.
11. Check battery and charging voltage.
12. Check exhaust emissions to verify fuel mixture, emission controls performance and ignition performance.
13. Check the vehicle's computer for presence of any trouble codes.
14. Install a new air filter.
15. Replace the fuel filter(s).
16. Replace the PCV (positive crankcase ventilation) valve.
17. Check all emissions control components.

*Some shops may charge extra for this service.

Hone communication skills

(NAPS)—As fall arrives, many motorists will be having their vehicles serviced before colder weather sets in. Here are some tips on communicating effectively with repair shops:

Do your homework before taking your vehicle in for repairs or service:

- Read the owner's manual to learn about the vehicle's systems and components.
- Follow the recommended service schedules; keep a log of all repairs and service.

Use all of your senses to inspect your car for:

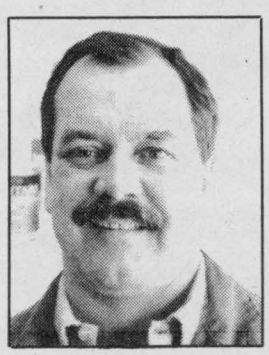
- Unusual sounds, odors, drips, leaks, smoke, warning lights, gauge readings; also check for worn tires, belts and hoses.
- Changes in acceleration, engine performance, gas mileage and fluid levels.
- Problems in handling, braking or steering and unusual vibrations.

Note when the problem occurs:

- When did the problem first start? Is it constant or periodic, when the vehicle is cold or after the engine has warmed up?
- At all speeds? Under acceleration? During braking? When shifting?

Once you are at the repair establishment:

- Be prepared to describe the symptoms, but do not suggest a specific course of repair.
- Do not be afraid to ask questions.
- Don't expect an on-the-spot diagnosis, but ask to be apprised of the problem, course of action and costs before work begins.
- Be sure you understand policies regarding diagnostic fees, labor rates, return of old parts, guarantees, etc.

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Tips for older drivers

(CCC)—"Don't threaten my freedom of mobility," demands an 85-year-old driver who, according to statistics, has 10 times as many accidents as drivers half his age. Most safety experts agree that easily renewed licenses, issued to drivers of any age and often with no testing required, contribute to this terrible highway statistic.

The vehicle, per se, can be a major factor in the driver's ability to stay out of trouble. Do streaking windshield wipers blur a senior's already-failing eyesight? Has it become uncomfortable for the driver to turn his head beyond 20 degrees? Can his foot reach the brake pedal in time to avoid a crisis?

Perhaps driver condition and vehicle condition go hand in hand, suggests the Car Care Council. A more "forgiving" car, one that's capable of helping a driver avoid trouble, could make a big difference in preventing a potential accident.

Council President Don Midgley urges vehicle owners, especially older drivers, to pay attention to those vehicle functions that affect driving safety. To mention a few:

Vision—Are all lights, including turn signals, working properly? Do windshield wipers clean the glass to prevent glare from oncoming headlights?

Handling—Is steering responsive? Does the car stop straight and true?

Dependability—Will the car start when you want it to? Are the tires OK or will a worn tire let you down when you can't get help? How's the spare?

While a vehicle cannot be expected to compensate for a driver's physical or mental condition, its mechanical condition can make a big difference in a driving emergency.

Keeping your vehicle healthy

by Dale Millay

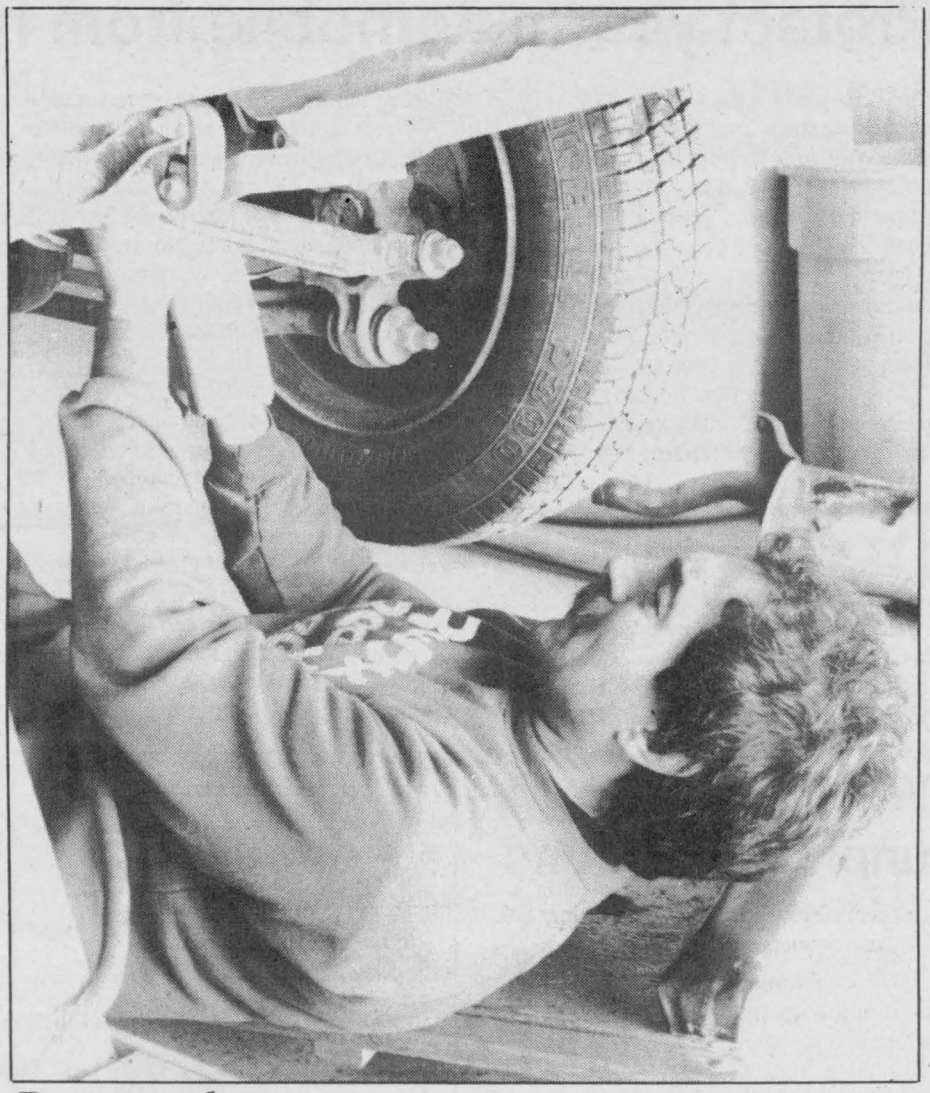
(NAPS)—Simple preventive maintenance is one of the best ways to stop a possible car problem before it becomes expensive or even dangerous.

These tips may help:

• It's a good idea to check your oil every time you get gasoline. This can help you detect increased oil consumption and prevent engine damage.

• The life of your tires can be greatly improved if you make sure they're properly inflated at all times. Underinflated tires can also affect load-carrying capacity and make driving dangerous. Check tire pressure with a good-quality air gauge at least every two weeks and before any long trips.

• Even in cold weather, run your air conditioner for a few minutes every week to keep the system lubricated. Also, check the horn and lights weekly.



Down under

Gaetan Forgues of Gaetan Auto Centre in Embrun works on an automobile. *Press Photo —Erwin*

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Protect your automobile from nasty weather

(NAPS)—Now's the time to start unpacking the winter wardrobe. But while you're searching for your favorite cold-weather coat, don't forget another important covering: your car's winter coat.

Many car owners don't realize that automobiles need special care before the onslaught of winter weather. Experts recommend putting your car through a "protection inspection" in early fall to prepare for winter's damaging elements. The first step in winterizing your car is removing all of summer's residues from the interior and exterior of the vehicle.

When cleaning the vehicle, special attention should be paid to those hard-to-reach places like the engine compartment, vehicle underbody and inside door panels. It is also important to remove dirt and residue from the interior's upholstery and carpet, as residue buildup accelerates deterioration.

Once a thorough cleaning is complete, protection is the next step. With winter comes snow, slush, rain, ice and worst of all, salt. Millions of tons of salt are distributed over slippery North American roads every winter. A surprising amount of it will end up on your car, corroding painted and metal surfaces.

Although new vehicle design and galvanized metals offer improved rust protection, it doesn't guarantee that newer cars will never rust. On untreated vehicles, salt and water can reach interior door panels and door seams, causing rust that will eventually eat through to the exterior. Many people believe that after their car is exposed to salt, a thorough wash is adequate protection against corrosion. While frequent washing is good, it only removes salt from the outside of the body panels, not from inside surfaces of doors and seams, where it can be most damaging.

The only sure protection against corrosion for your vehicle's body panels is an aftermarket rust protection coating. Rust protection warranties should cover all body panels and structures prone to rust—especially the many hidden areas.

Even if you now own a three- to five-year-old automobile, it's not too late to begin protecting your car. Special products can actually neutralize existing rust that may have already formed.

Here is some good advice: Start this fall by having the interior and exterior of the vehicle professionally detailed and protected by application of high-quality sealants to protect vulnerable surfaces. Have your car professionally rust-protected with time-proven products by technicians trained in rust protection application.

Hot pointers for cold weather

Is your vehicle ready for winter? Take it to a professional mechanic or take a few minutes to look it over to make sure.

- Check the battery for loose cables and light-colored terminal corrosion.
- Replenish oil, antifreeze, windshield wiper solvent, power steering and brake fluids as necessary.
- Replace windshield wiper blades if they don't clean properly.
- Check tires for proper inflation and tread.
- Inspect lights and turn signals.
- Join an automobile club.

Members have peace of mind knowing that the cost of tows or road service calls is covered in their membership dues.

Winter's most unpleasant sound

(NAPS)—Some go, "Click, click, click."

Some go, "Rare, rare, rare, rare . . ."

It's a cold morning, and with just a twist of the ignition key, you hear one of winter's most unpleasant sounds, the distinctive "dead or dying battery" noise.

Within a few minutes, you're searching for jumper cables or shopping for a new battery. In either case, a little knowledge about batteries can be very helpful.

Using jumper or booster cables can be dangerous if done improperly. Your car's owner's manual will give instructions on how best to use jumper or booster cables to start your car. No matter what your brother-in-law or best friend says, don't deviate from these instructions. Many batteries will work again when the temperature warms up.

Batteries are manufactured to perform in different temperature ranges. When it drops below this level, an older battery may not have enough power to start your engine. Replacement batteries are available in a variety of power ratings to meet your needs.

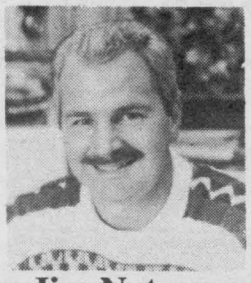
Batteries are rated by cold-cranking amperage, which is a measurement of the electrical current capable of being sent at cold temperatures, the hardest work your battery does. As batteries age, they lose power and are most likely to fail or not deliver enough power when it is colder.

Car owners can help their batteries by regularly cleaning the connections, called posts or terminals, with a stiff wire brush. If it is not a maintenance-free battery, the level should be checked regularly and topped with distilled water.

If your battery needs to be replaced, a reputable mechanic can install one in just a few minutes. Higher amp batteries usually cost more, but they may last longer and perform better in colder temperatures. Check your owner's manual to see if a higher amp battery can be installed in your car.

Lazzaro has assembled a booklet of car-care tips, available free by calling 1-800-9-FIRESTONE. The booklet provides a variety of information on how to maintain a vehicle for maximum safety and value.

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- o Inner Shafts lower
- o Tie Rod Ends outer
- o Pitman Arm
- o Stabilizer
- o Power Steering Leaks
- o Shocks rear
- o Springs rear

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- o Left rear
- o Spare
- o Right front
- o Right rear

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- o Drum or Disc right rear
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- o Hand brake Operation
- o Wheel Cylinder front left
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- o Horn
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- o Battery Gravity
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Handle car coolants safely

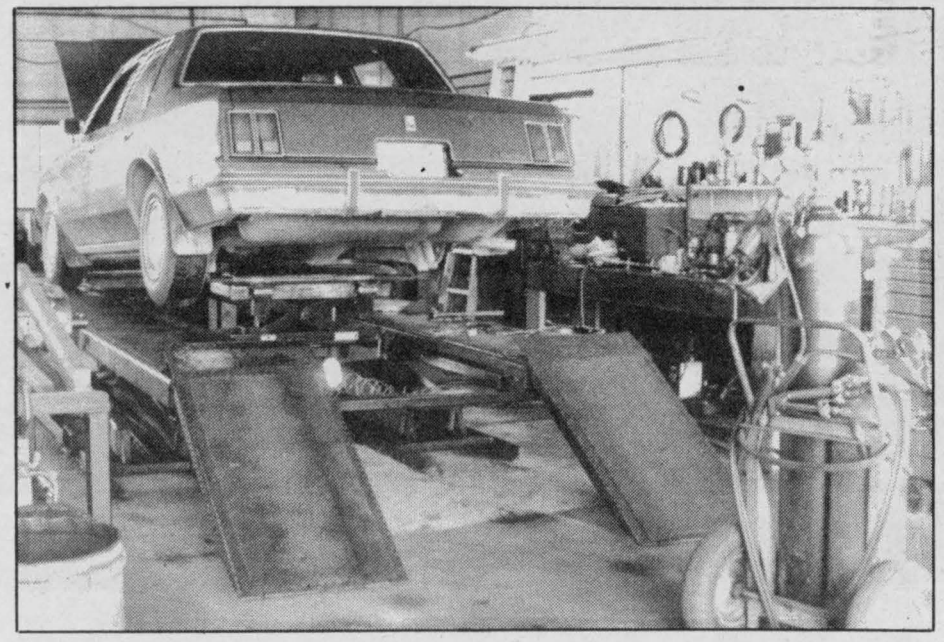
(NAPS)—To ensure that your automobile engine's coolant system runs efficiently and is protected from both boil-over and corrosion, engine coolants—otherwise known as antifreeze—must be changed on a regular basis. While many do-it-yourselfers take on this task, few are aware of the potential hazards. Improper handling and disposal of new or used engine coolant can put people and pets at risk.

Like many household chemicals, engine coolant is poisonous when ingested. Children and household pets are especially at risk if spilled engine coolant is not cleaned up. While child-resistant closures, properly labeled containers and consumer awareness programs have helped reduce the occurrence of accidental poisoning, ultimately, user caution is the most effective means.

Glycol (ethylene or propylene), the major component of engine coolant, is readily biodegradable. However, used engine coolant may contain contaminants—lead in particular—leached from the engine coolant system during operation. These materials can put the environment at risk if used engine coolant is improperly handled or discarded.

Here are 10 tips to help consumers handle new or used engine coolant in a safe manner:

1. Read all usage and warning labels before using engine coolant.
2. Store new or used engine coolant in properly labeled, child-proof containers, and do not transfer engine coolant into other product containers (i.e. milk jugs, soda bottles, liquor bottles, etc.)
3. Keep all containers of engine coolant out of the reach of children and pets, especially when containers are open during use.
4. When changing engine coolant, ensure that the fluid has cooled before opening the radiator and draining the coolant. Hot engine coolant can cause thermal burns.
5. Wear proper eye protection when changing the engine coolant in your vehicle. If engine coolant contacts the eyes, flush thoroughly with water for at least 15 minutes.
6. If engine coolant is accidentally swallowed, induce vomiting if the patient is alert. Call a physician or poison-control center immediately.
7. Repair leaks in your radiator or engine-coolant system immediately.
8. Clean up any spilled engine coolant immediately. Should spillage occur, soak it up with absorbent material and flush the contacted surface with water thoroughly. Do not dump engine coolant onto the ground, into natural waters or into storm sewers.
9. Check the options available for the disposal of used engine coolant, as regulations may vary. Options may include recycling or disposal by a commercial/municipal sanitary-waste treatment facility or a licensed hazardous-waste disposal firm.
10. Use common sense. Treat engine coolant with the same caution you do any other household chemical.



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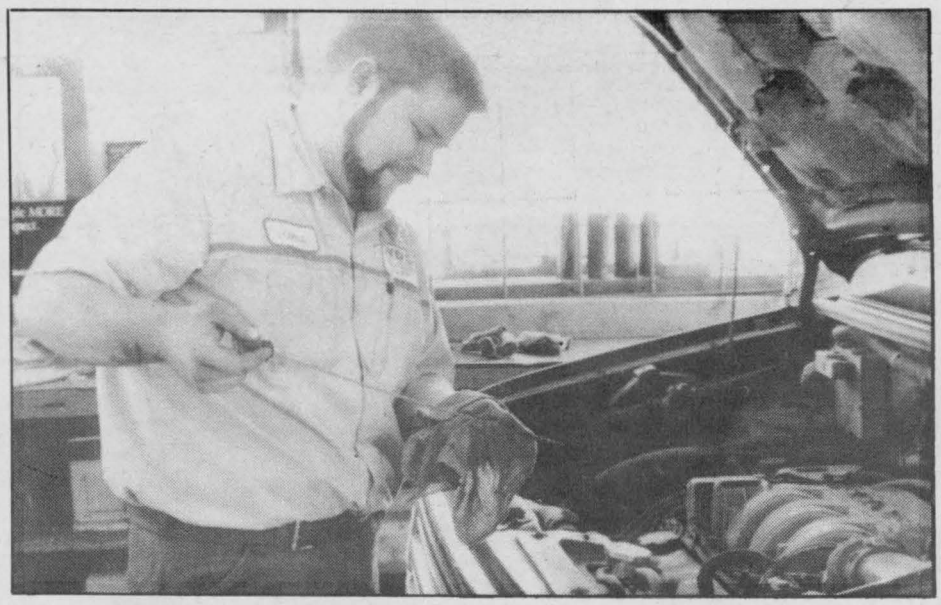
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Lorne Derick of WJL Boyd and Sons Ltd. checks the oil level of a vehicle.

Choosing an auto repair shop

As fall arrives, many motorists will be having their vehicles serviced before colder weather sets in. Here are some tips on finding a good repair establishment.

- Start shopping for a repair facility *before* you need one.
- Ask friends and associates for recommendations; consult local consumer organizations.
- Arrange for alternate transportation so you will not feel forced to choose a shop based solely on location.
- Look for a neat, well-organized facility, with vehicles in the parking lot equal in value to your own and modern equipment in the service bays.
- Look for a courteous staff, willing to answer all of your questions.
- Look for policies regarding labor rates, diagnostic fees, guarantees, etc.
- Ask if the repair facility specializes or if it usually handles your type of repair work.
- Look for signs of professionalism in the customer service area, such as civic, community or customer service awards.
- Look for evidence of qualified technicians: trade school diplomas, certificates of advanced course work and certified technicians on duty.

How many fluids to check?

(CCC)—How many fluids can be checked on a typical car? Four? Six? Ten? If you guessed ten, you're right. They're found in the:

1. Engine
2. Transmission
3. Braking System
4. Battery
5. Windshield Washers
6. Power Steering
7. Cooling System (Antifreeze)
8. CV Joints/Rear Axle
9. Gas Tank
10. Air Conditioner

All of the above require periodic checking and "topping off," except the CV joints (which should be checked for leakage) and some batteries. Which ones require changing? The engine oil, antifreeze, transmission fluid and brake fluid.

How many require filter replacement? Generally, three: the engine oil, transmission fluid and fuel.

Late-model cars are more susceptible to trouble due to contaminated fuel and brake fluid, says the Car Care Council. The tiny orifices in fuel injection and braking systems require that the fluids passing through them be absolutely clean. For the long life and dependability of your vehicle, check fluids regularly, says the Council.

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Imitations not up to par?

If you happened to be one of the millions of people involved in an accident last year, do you think you would have a say in the type of crash parts used to repair your vehicle?

Chances are you might not!

Crash parts are exterior sheet metal and plastic parts—such as hoods, doors, fenders and bumpers—most frequently damaged in accidents. In recent years, insurance companies have been using so-called "imitation" crash parts to hold down repair costs.

Imitations are unauthorized copies of vehicle manufacturer parts and are produced primarily in Taiwan. Testing by vehicle manufacturers and independent collision-repair organizations over the years has raised questions about the quality of imitations, yet insurance companies continue to specify them for repairs.

Who are the insurers listening to? It doesn't appear to be their policyholders, if results of a recent national survey are any indication.

Based on survey results, the overwhelming majority of consumers believe they have the right to know in advance if imitation crash parts will be used to repair their vehicles.

The use of imitation parts was the focus of a recently settled class-action lawsuit in the United States against State Farm, that country's largest auto insurer. The suit, filed in 1987, charges that State Farm "engaged in an improper policy and practice of requiring the use of non-OEM parts" to repair their policyholders' vehicles. In the settlement, State Farm agreed to repair or replace imitation parts or to pay cash settlements to eligible policyholders. It is estimated that 80,000 State Farm policyholders in Illinois are eligible to receive compensation.

Sixty-eight percent of survey respondents believe insurance companies have no right to require use of imitation parts, particularly without advance consent from the vehicle owner.

The survey revealed the majority (69 percent) of consumers prefer crash parts made by the manufacturer of their vehicles, primarily because of perceptions of superior quality.

In addition, more than half of the survey respondents said they were unaware that the use of imitation parts may affect their vehicle manufacturer's warranty if it causes an original part to fail.

Your battery: headed for trouble?

(NAPS)—Car batteries tend to fail when you least expect it. Fortunately, there are a few telltale signs that your battery is headed for trouble.

- The car cranks slowly or the cranking is interrupted.
- The dashboard light comes on for extended periods.
- The battery seems to lose power quickly in cold starts.
- The headlights dim when the car is idling.

It is surprising to many motorists who find their batteries dead in cold temperatures that the problems are actually caused by a combination of heat and natural vibration during the summer season. You might want to check out the new models that improve the battery's ability to withstand damage caused by warm weather. These new batteries could last twice as long as ordinary batteries, and some carry a warranty for up to seven years.

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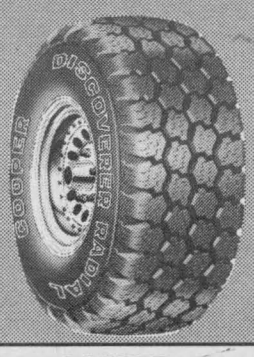
We'll Help Pick Up The Pieces



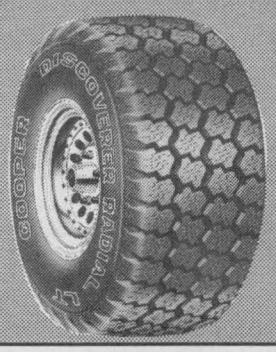
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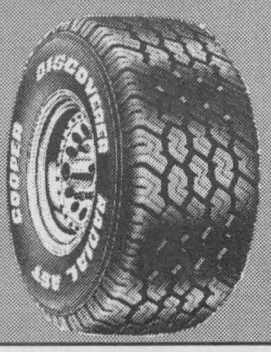
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Gas-saving tips from the pros

"A few minor changes in driving and maintenance habits will increase your gasoline mileage, help the environment and extend the life of your vehicle," advise expert automotive technicians. They offer the following tips:

Monitor tire pressure. Underinflated or poorly aligned tires waste fuel—the engine has to work harder to move the vehicle. Consult your owner's manual for the recommended pressure. You need an alignment if you notice uneven tread wear on one side or if the vehicle "pulls" to one side on a flat road.

Lighten that load. Remove unnecessary items from the vehicle. Less weight means better mileage.

Think ahead. Consolidate your daily errands. Some trips may be unnecessary. Also, try to travel when traffic is light so you can avoid stop-and-go conditions.

Avoid excessive idling. Shut off the engine while waiting for friends and family. And since today's cars and trucks are designed to "warm up" fast, forget about those five-minute warm ups in the morning.

Observe speed limits. Gas mileage decreases above 55 mph.

Drive sensibly. For better gas mileage, avoid sudden accelerations and hard braking. Anticipate traffic patterns ahead and adjust your speed gradually. Your engine and brakes should last longer, too.

Keep your engine running at its peak. A well-maintained engine operates more efficiently and thus gets better gas mileage. Follow the service schedules listed in the owner's manual. Replace filters and fluids as recommended; have engine performance problems (rough idling, poor acceleration, etc.) corrected at a repair facility. Given today's high-tech engines, it's wise to have this type of work done by auto technicians who are certified in engine performance.

"Pay me now or pay me later." We could extend the life of our vehicles by up to 50 percent through regular, routine maintenance as prescribed in the owner's manual.

The benefits of conservation and maintenance are twofold. In addition to saving fossil fuels, drivers can protect their automotive investment.

Did you know...

- Millions of car owner's manuals are printed each year. Most of them remain unread.
- A survey revealed motorists could extend the life of their vehicles by up to 50 percent through regular, routine maintenance.
- The items vehicle owners most often neglect are oil changes, engine coolant/antifreeze and tire pressure.
- A fouled, misfiring spark plug can reduce fuel efficiency by as much as 30 percent.
- Everyone can get better gas mileage by making sure their tires are properly inflated, by observing speed limits, and avoiding sudden accelerations and excessive idling.

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