

Tune - up today, avoid trouble tomorrow

Today's high-tech automobiles can accumulate tens of thousands of miles with very little evidence of wear. Despite the longevity, cars still need to be inspected regularly to avoid costly repairs down the road.

"One area often overlooked is the ignition system," says Bill Wetzel, senior product manager for Belden Automotive, a division of Cooper Automotive. "Battery connections and spark

plug wires are essential parts in where the cables connect to the checking the wires include corevery car that many times go unchecked too long.

In most cases, that all-to-familiar sound of a grinding starter hand-in-hand," Wetzel says. "The barely turning an engine over can be traced back to the battery.

Batteries lose their charge over time, especially in cold weather, and cable connections can corrode. A certified technician can test the strength of a battery's is the spark plug wires. A numcharge. If there is any corrosion ber of signs to look for when

battery, they should be thoroughly cleaned.

"Batteries and corrosion go terminals need to be cleaned and checked regularly. They are simple enough to check, and it could save time and money in the long run if there is a problem."

Another area often overlooked

roded and torn boots, and cracks and abrasions in the wires.

The boots will corrode and tear from excessive vibrations, while heat may cause rubber insulation to crack. Abrasions can occur when a stretched wire comes in contact with another object. Also, a spark plug wire soaked in oil may not perform up to par.

Warning signs of trouble include misfire during acceleration, hard starting and reduced

"Damaged wires can carry electrical current to the spark plugs, but the charge may not be as strong as it should be," Wetzel says. "Trouble with wires can lead to bigger trouble down the road, including towing charges and large repair bills.'

Just because your car starts every day doesn't mean the ignition system shouldn't inspected on a regular basis.

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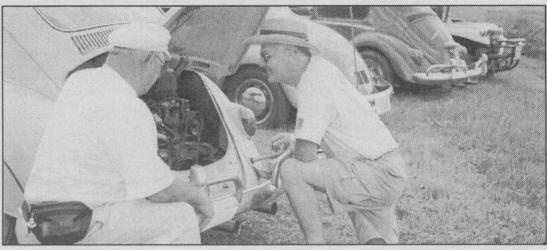
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A closer look inside

These two gents are busy checking out the engine compartment of this VW bug. It is vital that certain engine items are checked regularly to ensure smooth and trouble free operation, especially in the colder months of the year. As we head to winter we need to have our mechanic check our engine area thoroughly.

Chieftain Photo by S.L.Johnston



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Facing your brake fears

In survey after survey, Canadian drivers rank brake failure as their number one fear of mechanical failure. Yet, only 20% identified brakes as a system that should be checked regularly.

Car Care Canada believes people don't check their brakes because they don't understand them. Discs. Drums. Power assist. ABS. Why does life have to be so complicated? Well, it's not so bad. it all depends on friction—the friction between the brake pad and the lining in a drum or the rotor of a disc brake, and the friction between the tires and the road.

When you press down on the brake pedal, that creates pressure in the master cylinder. This is passed through the brake lines to the brakes. If you have power or power assisted brakes, you don't have to press as hard on the pedal to get the same braking effect. In a drum brake, the brake shoes inside the drum press outward against the brake lining to create the stopping force. It's an enclosed unit that's relatively inexpensive to maintain.

Disc brakes are like bicycle brakes - the callipers pinch the disc, or rotor, to create the stopping force. Because of their better heat rejection, disc brakes offer up to three times more stopping power than drums. That's why most cars have discs on the front, where most of the stopping work is done, and drums on the rear.

Because of the heat generated in braking, pads used to be made with asbestos. Newer metallic materials have done away with asbestos and its harmful dust.

The fluid in the master cylinder is the medium that translates your pedal pressure into brake pressure. It absorbs water very easily, so if you have to add fluid, use a fresh container. And use only the approved brake fluid described in your owner's mannal

How do you know when it's time for a brake job?

If your brakes squeal or make a grinding noise, or if you feel a lot of vibration or grabbing, it's time for a check up. If your brake pedal sinks to the floor, or feels spongy, you may be low on fluid or have a leak in the system.

You should rotate your tires every 10,000 km or so to make them last. When the car is on the hoist and the tires are off, that's an ideal time to do a little preventative maintenance and get your brakes checked. Brakes can

Have you had your brakes checked lately?

last 60,000 km or more -- or they can need replacement after 10,0-00-15,000 km. Don't let this simple maintenance item slide, or the next sound you hear could be the crunch of a collision.

If you like paying for brake jobs, here's how to ensure you'll need frequent brake jobs:

1. Race up to stop signs and slam on the brakes.

2. Ride your brakes -- use your right foot on the gas and rest your left on the brake pedal while you drive. This will also confuse the drivers behind you, because your brake lights will be on all the time and they'll have no warning when you really want to ston.

3. Stay really close to the car in front so you have to be on your brakes a lot to match every little chance in speed.

4. Ignore those warning signs, like chirping brakes or grinding noises. Then a simple pad replacement becomes a full replacement of rotors and linings and costs hundreds more.

Can you economize on brake jobs? Absolutely. Car Care Canada suggests a simple five point program that could save you hundreds of dollars over the life of your car:

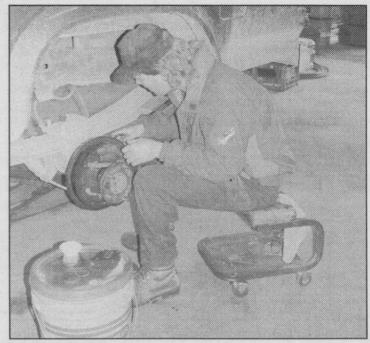
1. Preventive maintenance. Every 10,000 km or so, when you get your tires rotated, have your brakes inspected.

2. Don't neglect your parking brake. Using it regularly will keep the cable from seizing up, and will reduce your need for repairs.

3. Install quality parts & materials. Cheap stuff is a false economy that you'll pay more for in more frequent brake jobs and inferior performance.

4. Driving techniques. Keep a buffer space between you and the car in front, and use it to slow down on the engine so you don't have to use the brakes as often.

5. System flush. Once a year, have a full brake inspection, including all lines and hoses, and replace the brake fluid with fresh fluid.



Checking the brakes

Tommy McMillan of Tommy's Complete Automotive is busy ensuring his customers are ready for winter. Brakes are important and need special attention as the season of snow and ice approaches.

Chieftain photo by S.L. Johnston

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Cold enough for you?

Most people think that if they winterize their cars in the fal!, before it gets really cold, they'll make it through the winter without problems. And they're mostly right. Others think that if they haven't had a problem yet, they won't have one for the rest of the winter. (Now there's a recipe for

Difficulty starting? A cold engine is a stiff engine - it's hard to get the pistons moving, to draw in the fuel, and get started. So it needs more battery power. In cold weather, your battery may produce only 40% of the power it

give it a break -- use a block heater. A block heater, with a timer to turn it on a couple of hours before you need your car, will make starting much easier. Starting warm can save you money on gas, too.

Take a look at your battery terminals. Is there any white deposit on them? That corrosion can insulate the terminals and prevent the battery giving your car its first boost of power in the morning to get it going. If your battery is getting a little elderly, you may not get a second chance.

It can take up to 40,000 volts to zap a spark into your cylinders. If the ignition wires are worn or cracked, some of that power may not make it, and you could have starting troubles.

One of the most important things to watch is your cooling system. There are two things to watch: the concentration of coolant, and the amount. In most parts of Canada, a 50/50 mix of coolant and water keeps the coolant from freezing, lubricates the water pump, and protects the cooling system from corrosion.



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This local gent, daughter and family dog proudly showoff their Forty Ford. Many people enjoy restoring older vehicles as a hobby and are proud to display their gleaming, smooth running vehicles. Chieftain photo by S.L. Johnston



The hot and the cold of pre-winter automobile inspections

One autumn ritual that has become as traditional as college football and apple cider is the pre-winter car inspection. It is a sign of caring to make sure the family car is in good operating condition to make it through winter storms.

A good rule of thumb is to remember to check the systems that allow the car to run both hot and cold. You want the engine to run at the correct temperature so it doesn't overheat or fail, but you want the car's heater to keep the inside toasty warm.

A heating and cooling system inspection in the fall is just good preventive maintenance. The heating system inspection checks the condition of the heater, the heater hose assemblies and connecting parts. The cooling system inspection reviews the radiator, water pump, engine temperature and antifreeze levels, as well as the condition of the belts and hoses. The mechanic will look for worn, damaged or leaking

The goal of the inspection is to identify problems before you end up stranded. The mechanic should recommend replacing worn or damaged hoses or belts with new parts. Cracks on belts and soft spots on hoses could mean that it is just a matter of time before these parts fail. In many cases, a small amount of money spent replacing a belt or a hose can increase your safety on the road. You can conduct a heating and cooling system inspection yourself or take the car to your local mechanic. Many mechanics participate in the Dayco Cooling System Specialist program and offer free inspections.

Cooling and heating system inspections are not time-consuming. Many mechanics will let you make an appointment in advance, so you can schedule the inspection for a Saturday morning or during a lunch hour. Because Cooling System Specialists stock a wide range of Dayco belts and hoses, chances are most of them will have replacements on hand, if replacement is necessary.

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Top seven brake - problem symptoms

1. Grinding noises can be signs of worn pads or shoe linings. Delay in replacing pads or shoes can damage expensive drums and rotors, requiring their replace-

2. Brake squeal may also be a sign of dragging shoes or pads, which can result in poor gas mileage, premature wear of linings and damage to drums or

3. Brake chatter and pedal pulsation can indicate a warped rotor or drum surface.

4. "Bottoming out" of your pedal can indicate a fluid leak or master cylinder problem.

5. Unreliable and inconsistent stopping or grabbing brakes are often signs of a leaking calliper, master cylinder or wheel cylinder. If this goes on unrepaired, it could cause at least a partial failure of the braking system.

6. A soft pedal or excessive pedal effort can mean any one of several problems, including a leak in the hydraulic system, low fluid level or a failed brake booster. Your car should be taken to a professional mechanic for a Total Brake ServiceTM inspection and an explanation of necessary services and repairs.

7. Excessive pad wear could be the result of the wrong friction material grade for your vehicle or type of driving. Towing or heavy

Is your car ready for winter? hauling wears pads out faster than normal driving. This also applies to driving in hilly or mountainous areas and making quick or sudden stops. A premium-quality pad or shoe should be installed for these conditions.

A thorough brake job includes more than replacing pads and shoes. Total Brake ServiceTM includes an inspection of your car's entire braking system, from master cylinder, through the lines, and down to the pads.

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