

SPRING CAR CARE



Prepare Your Emergency Kit

As the weather warms, so too does the chance for flooding, hurricanes and other tropical storms. In the occurrence of any natural disaster, hopefully you are evacuated in time to avoid driving in any inclement conditions. But it never hurts to be prepared.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) recommends the items below for your car emergency kit.

Besides your kit, there are other things you can do to stay safe in the face of an emergency, including keeping a full tank of gas in your car, putting on your flashers if you are ever stranded and call for help immediately.

Visit www.ready.gov for more information and helpful tips from FEMA.

FEMA EMERGENCY CAR KIT

- Jumper cables
- Flashlights and extra batteries
- First aid kit and necessary medications in case you are away from home for a prolonged time
 - Food items containing protein such as nuts and energy bars; canned fruit and a portable can opener
 - Water for each person and pet in your car
 - AM/FM radio to listen to traffic reports and emergency messages
 - Cat litter or sand for better tire traction
 - Shovel
 - Ice scraper
 - Warm clothes, gloves, hat, sturdy boots, jacket and an extra change of clothes
 - Blankets or sleeping bags
 - A fully-charged cell phone and phone charger
 - Flares or reflective triangle
 - Baby formula and diapers if you have a small child



Greener, Cleaner Car

As science and research continue to advance, we find out more and more ways we can be lightening the load on our environment. How we drive and care for our vehicles is no exception.

Safer products are on the market for cleaning. There are maintenance tips that every driver should follow to cut down on harmful emissions. The information is out there. It is up to us to put it into practice.

AIR FILTERS

A dirty air filter has a direct impact on your car's performance and efficiency. The dirtier the filter, the more gas burned during driving.

Your air filter can become clogged with dirt, dust and bugs and should be regularly inspected. Changing it will not only improve your engine's functioning, but will cut down on the amount of gas that is being emitted into the atmosphere.

TIRE CHECKS

According to the Car Care Council, about two billion gallons of gas each year could be saved if the tires on every American's car were properly inflated.

Improperly inflated tires add resistance and balance issues that make your car's system to work harder to move down the highway. Tire issues can increase fuel costs as much as three to five cents per gallon.

Check your owner's manual for your car's optimal tire pressure.

GAS FILL-UPS

You may think that you're doing your car a service by topping off the tank while filling up. But doing so can actually cost you in the long run.

Some pumps engineered to protect

the environment draw extra vapors back into the pump, according to the Environmental Protection Agency. This means you could be paying for even more gas than you are getting.

Remember to stop pumping when the nozzle shuts off and check your car's gas cap. A loose or damaged cap can lead to evaporated gas that can

harm the environment and waste your money.

PROPER DISPOSAL

If you change your own oil and perform your own car repairs, it is vital that you dispose of all engine fluids and batteries in the proper manner.

Some repair facilities accept these items from customers and can dispose of them free of charge.

You can also contact your local government's safety office for information on hazardous material drop-off and recycling stations. Doing so can help keep harmful fluids from damaging animals and the environment.



Changing Headlight Bulbs

Yes, the days are seemingly getting longer again. But you still need your headlights to be in proper working order.

If one of your headlight bulbs goes out, you can be putting yourself and others at risk for a serious accident or a citation for a non-moving violation. Luckily, changing out a headlight bulb is a quick and painless process – at least in new model cars.

If you drive an older model, you may need to consult your manual, as many require you to remove the entire lamp to change your bulb. Streamlined and simplified, recent models require a one- or two-step bulb replacement process. Here are the steps:

STEP 1: LOCATE YOUR BULB AND IDENTIFY ITS TYPE

Cars and trucks come with headlight bulbs that plug into the back of the headlight lens housing.

You can find out what type of bulb you need by checking your manual, asking the service clerk at your local car care center or by simply opening the hood and locating the back of your headlight. The bulb holder will typically have a small wire harness protruding into the engine bay.

STEP 2: REMOVING YOUR OLD BULB

Using caution to avoid breaking the affixing metal or plastic clip, remove the wire harness from the bulb holder. Rotate the bulb to release it from the headlamp assembly.

STEP 3: INSTALLING YOUR NEW BULB

Carefully rotate your new bulb into place within the headlight assembly. Handle the bulb with a clean tissue or rag while replacing to avoid leaving

behind oils from your skin that can cause premature failure. Reattach the wire harness to the back of your new headlight bulb, and you should be all set.

CHANGE THE PAIR

Remember, if you are using a dif-

ferent type bulb for a burned-out headlight, you must place that same type bulb in the working headlight. In fact, DMV.org recommends that you replace both bulbs at all times to avoid differences in brightness, even if only one bulb is burned out.



Dead Battery? Jump it Safely

Knowledge of how a car battery works and how to safely change one can be invaluable information to any driver. Car batteries can die at inopportune times, leaving you stranded with no way of starting your vehicle.

Without jumper cables and another vehicle to provide a jump, you could actually be stranded for a long period time. And while that can be dangerous in its own regard, working to repair or jump-start your battery can also be hazardous.

According to the Sight and Hearing Association, about 6,000 people suffer serious eye injuries, including blindness, each year from working around car batteries. These

damages can be avoided with an understanding of how batteries work.

BATTERY DANGERS

So why are batteries so dangerous? They contain sulfuric acid and produce hydrogen and oxygen gases that can cause a battery to explode when they come into contact with a spark, according to the National Safety Council.

Eye injuries are the most

common caused by a battery explosion because of the flying fragments and acid.

Whenever cleaning, changing or checking your battery, it is important to wear eye safety protection.

SAFETY MONTH

The month of October has been designated as Auto Battery Safety Month to raise awareness of battery dangers, promote battery safety, and

educate motorists on how to properly and safely jump-start and change a battery. But don't wait until October to practice safe battery care.

SAFETY TIPS

Follow these tips from the Sight and Hearing Association at all times:

- Regularly check your car's battery for wear and damage
- Purchase a pair of jumper cables that are at least 12 feet

long, color coded, and tested and approved by the Society of Automotive Engineers

- Equip your vehicle with proper safety goggles, a flashlight, and a step-by-step guide for jump-starting a car battery
- Turn off lights, heater, and all other electronic loads before jump-starting
- Never jump-start a frozen battery, allow the two vehicles or jumper cables to touch each other, or lean over the battery when making connections



Passing the Smell Test

Mechanics use all sorts of specialized tools to repair your car, but the most powerful diagnostic device for detecting vehicle issues may be on your face.

That's right. Your nose can hold the key to identifying specific odors that you should never ignore. Paying attention to these indicators can help you remain aware of your car's engine health and reduce your chances of breaking down.

They key is acting fast and getting your car into the mechanic as quickly as possible.

THE SIX SMELLS

The Car Care Council identifies the following six smelly signs and what they could mean for your car. For a more detailed list, visit CarCare.org.

- **Burned Rubber:** This could mean slipping drive belts or misplaced loose hoses. These loose parts could be rubbing against pulleys, causing a burnt rubber scent.

- **Hot Oil:** Oil that is leaking onto the exhaust system can emit a very noticeable smell. To verify the leak, look for oil on the pavement or smoke coming from the engine area.

- **Gasoline:** This could mean a gas leak in some area of the vehicle such as a fuel injector line or the fuel tank. Any smell of fuel is no laughing matter. Gasoline is obviously considered a possible fire hazard, requiring your full attention and care.

- **Sweet Syrup:** This sweet scent is a telltale sign that you have engine coolant leaking from a component related your car's cooling system.

- **Burning Carpet:** This unique smell can mostly be linked to brake trouble. Have your brakes checked right away, especially if this smell is happening during normal driving conditions.

- **Rotten Eggs:** You may be facing an issue with catalytic converter not converting the hydrogen sulfide in the exhaust to sulfur dioxide properly. This smell can also be associated with a poor-running engine.



Dealing With Spring Showers

Spring showers can bring more than May flowers. They can also bring dangerous, slippery conditions to the roadways, too.

Of the more than six million vehicle crashes each year, 24 percent are weather related, according to the U.S. Department of Transportation. Seventy-five percent of weather-related crashes occur on wet pavement and 47 percent during rainfall, the DOT states.

Poor visibility, lane obstructions and pavement friction are all key issues to keep in mind while driving through rainy spring conditions.

THE FIRST BIG RAIN

Be careful driving after your area's first big rain of the spring season. Heavy rain after a long dry period can release oil, grease and dirt from the pavement, creating extra slippery conditions, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

The grime builds up on the roadway and can make it difficult for your tires to gain proper traction. Use extra caution after the first rain and give yourself some extra travel time.

WINDSHIELD WIPERS

There is no worse time to realize your windshield wipers are worn out than during a rain storm.

Neglected blades put drivers and passengers at serious risk by impairing vision and causing streaking. Inexpensive and easy to replace yourself, changing out your windshield wiper blades is paramount to your safety at all times, especially during the rainy season.

Many car care centers and retailers will even install them free of charge for you.



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TIRE ISSUES

Thin tire treads create hazardous driving conditions when water builds up on the roadway, according to the Car Care Council.

Deep tread can easily accommodate extra water from a rain storm. Thin tread causes your tire to hydroplane, which is essentially losing contact with the pavement and riding up on a film of water.

The Car Care Council recommends checking your tire tread by inserting a penny into the grooves of the tread. If you are able to see all of Lincoln's head, your tire is in need of a replacement.

DRIVE SAFELY

With proper driving techniques and common sense, smart driving is possible even in less-than-ideal condi-

tions.

Slow down and give yourself extra space on the highway. Following fellow drivers too closely during rainy conditions can lead to the need to brake quickly, which can lead to skidding and loss of control.

Avoid distractions such as phone calls, eating, drinking and texting while driving. Those actions can wait until you safely reach your destination.

Maintenance: By the Numbers

Think Your Car is 100 percent ready for the road? Sorry, but statistics show that you're probably incorrect. If you own a vehicle, chances are it needs some work, according to the Car Care Council.

With April considered National Car Care Month, spring is the perfect time to give your car some TLC.

Most issues require some due diligence, a few parts and some elbow grease to remedy. Doing so can help keep up on regular maintenance, which is crucial to extending the life of your vehicle while also improving its resale value.

STATISTICS

The council last year conducted vehicle inspections at car care events across the country. Here's what it found:

- 77 percent of all vehicles inspected needed service or parts
- The analysis of vehicle inspection forms found the top three problem areas contributing to vehicle failure rates to be engine oil (22 percent), engine cooling systems (20 percent) and brake service (18 percent)
- 18 percent of checked vehicles had the check-engine light burning
- New air filters were needed in 19 percent of vehicles
- 10 percent of batteries were not properly affixed
- 22 percent of vehicles had low or dirty motor oil
- 20 percent had low, leaky or dirty coolant
- 18 percent had inadequate brake fluid levels

EASY FIXES

Before you drive wildly to your local technician to give your vehicle a complete overhaul, consider the fact that many of these fixes are easy ones to perform yourself.

Checking fluids for leaks, optimum levels and cleanliness can be completed in a matter of minutes.

Fresh oil and a new air filter can be knocked out easily with a DIY oil change at home or at your local service center.

And many car part retailers will offer you a free diagnostic check of your engine light. In many cases, they can tell you exactly what is causing the issue and what parts you will need to fix it.

