



Vacation To-Do List

CCNS - When the last beach towel was loaded, the family pulled out of the driveway and headed on vacation, 1500 miles roundtrip. That's when an unsettling moaning noise caught their attention. Dad furrowed his brow. Mom tilted her head, listening intently.

"Did the folks at the repair shop say anything about that noise?" asked Dad.

"When?" asked Mom.

"When you got the pre-vacation checkup on the car."

Mom's back became poker straight, her eyebrows bumped into her hairline.

"You said YOU were going to take the car in for that."

Chances are the moaning noise was a result of low transmission fluid. But without a professional technician to check it out, how could the travelers be certain that topping it off would fix it?

Even though Mom and Dad had a failure to communicate, their idea of a vehicle inspection was a good one, says the Car Care Council. A pre-trip review is the smart way to begin a vacation or road trip.

"Long before the dog goes to the sitter and the neighbors are asked to pick up the newspapers, it's important to schedule an appointment with your repair facility to examine the vehicle," says Executive Director Rich White.

Fluids

As Mom and Dad learned, fluids are an important part of any vehicle checklist. Expect your technician to check and perhaps replace or top off the following: antifreeze/coolant, transmission, engine oil, brake fluid, washer fluid, power steering fluid and gasoline. The transmission fluid, oil and gasoline also have filters that will need to be examined.

Air filter

Another important filter to examine in a check up is the air filter. This strains the impurities and should be changed at recommended intervals in order to protect the engine.

Vision

Not surprisingly, it's a driver's vision, not his hearing or smell, which guides 90% of driving decisions. That's why something as simple as a misdirected or burned out headlight can spell disaster on a rainy night. Now is the time to make sure headlights,

windshields, window glass, signal lights, mirrors and wipers/blades are in good shape.

Brakes

Although brakes are constructed with built in “squealers” to alert motorists to declining conditions, it’s a good idea to have them examined before a trip. Brakes also should be checked at regular intervals (see owner’s manual) and whenever they begin feeling abnormal.

Battery

Unlike some of a car’s components, a battery can be easily tested and, if necessary, replaced prior to a trip. While cold weather affects a battery’s starting ability, hot weather takes its toll, making a trip with a weak battery a true crashout at best.

Tires

Technicians are fond of pointing out that at any given time, a motorist is connected to the road by the few square inches of rubber that are in contact with the road. Make sure that the tire tread is deep enough; the tires are properly inflated and have been correctly rotated, balanced and aligned.

“Your technician may suggest other checks to perform during a pre-vacation inspection,” says Wagner. “Don’t put your car’s reliability and your family’s safety on the line. The best bet is to get the most thorough examination you can afford. It’s some of the cheapest insurance around.”

 <p>The logo features a stylized red and blue wave above the text "Be Car Care Aware" in a red, italicized font.</p>	<p>Car Care Council 7101 Wisconsin Ave., Suite 1300 Bethesda, MD 20814-3415 Phone: 301-654-6664 Fax: 301-654-3299 www.carcare.org</p>
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