

Get your Car dealers' sales doing just 'great'

muffler installed properly

By DAVID EMLIE
Herald Special

John Harrison knows what he is talking about on the subject of mufflers, as he has been working on cars for the past 11 years, and in muffler shops for the past three years.

Mr. Harrison is a mechanic at the Thruway Muffler centre, and he says the most common problem he runs into is bad installation.

"We have a lot of problems with bad installation," he said. "They rattle and leak; it's a daily thing."

Mr. Harrison blames this problem on people being in the automotive business too long, and putting in too many hours.

"They put in 60 hours a week in some places," he said, "they get frustrated, and just want to get the job done."

Fortunately for Thruway customers, Mr. Harrison does not have this attitude. "The way I look at it is, if I do it wrong the first time, it's going to come back," he said, because of the muffler guarantees.

A second common problem with mufflers, Mr. Harrison said, is the normal rotting of the muffler that takes place. He said, however, that there is nothing that can be done to give mufflers a longer life.

This leads into the subject of guarantees. "They are guaranteed because people pay \$60 for a muffler, and they want it to last," he said.

When the mufflers are made, they are made fairly cheaply as the makers have to sell them to the dealers, who in turn have to charge for labor and hardware. If the mufflers were made expensively, the price would be high, and people would feel robbed, Mr. Harrison said.

"The average life for everything in the system is three years," he said, "but the tail pipes don't last quite so long."

Mr. Harrison explained the life of the muffler system varies according to the conditions affecting the car, such as climate, and how much the car is used.

"You will get some parts that will last only a year, and there is also defective workmanship," he said of muffler parts.

They now have stainless steel systems that will last the life of the car, but they cost four to five times more than a regular system, or approximately \$1,000, the mechanic said.

For those who may be in the market for a new muffler, or muffler system, Mr. Harrison gives a few warnings.

"You don't always need a whole new system," he said. "Be aware of how the guy approaches you and your car, how long he takes to inspect the car, and how thorough the inspection is. You have to go by intuition."

"I'll give people a break as much as possible," Mr. Harrison said. "I let people know how long a part is going to last, and if they don't mind coming back in six months to get it replaced, I won't mind fixing it when it comes in."

He explained this way people can wait for the part to wear out, and don't have to spend extra money immediately.

"If everything is done right, it will suit the customer and myself," he said.

With spring making its way in slowly, auto dealers are gearing up for the warm weather selling boom.

Georgetown and Acton dealerships are all reporting great sales so far for the spring, but most have different reasons for their success.

A sales representative at Georgetown Honda said their sales are going well because people are looking for small, front wheel drive cars.

"People are getting away from the big, luxury rear wheels," he said, "they want the small, luxury, front wheel drives."

However, over at Hyundai Country they feel sales are up because people with old clunkers that broke



Tim Allan

down during the cold weather need new cars.

"It's also the summer fever for new cars," said Tim Allan from Hyundai. "People want new cars, so they go out and buy them."

Meanwhile, Les Pelites at Achilles Motors in Acton said their Mazdas are selling so well because everyone knows Mazdas are very advanced in technology.

Although a majority of the companies have not seen a trend in car buying, they each sell a car which is a favorite with the buyer. These range from sports cars, to mid-size to small cars.

Capital Ford reports the Mustang is the biggest seller presently because of the value package includ-

ed with it, which gives the customer many extras that are not usually on the car, for the basic price.

The Ford rebate is another reason for the Mustang's success.

Ben VanDoorn at Georgetown Toyota said the Corolla GTS is the most popular.

"This is because of performance and dollar value," he said, "It is the least expensive of the sports cars, and the quickest."

"The Stellars are the most popular right now by a mile," said Mr. Allan, at Hyundai Country. "The car is well appointed, and people are impressed with the drive and handling."

Most of the dealers are finding that a broad range of people are buying their cars, and not just one specific group.

Georgetown Toyota is the exception to this rule, as they are finding that many more women are now buying sports cars.

Overall, trade-ins at the dealerships are less frequent than straight buys.

The dealers' reasoning for this trend is people are getting smarter, and selling their own cars.

Another reason, which the Honda representative gave, was, "People who have small cars have their friends, neighbors and relatives waiting to buy them."

Personalize your car with options

Manufacturers offer many interesting, useful options to address the special needs of buyers. The Hamilton Automobile Club recommends that consumers should evaluate all factory-installed options before deciding to buy a car "off the lot" from a dealer.

Even dealers with large inventories seldom have exactly what a buyer wants. Also, most optional equipment is easier to install in the factory, than after the car is built.

For instance, some motorists prefer a spare tire that matches the tires on the car. On many Chrysler Corp. and Ford Motor Co. vehicle models, a conventional, full-sized spare tire is optional at a cost of \$80 to \$120.

Also, some General Motors Corp. cars, including many with front-wheel drive, can be ordered with a higher drive gear ratio, often at no additional cost. This option gives

low-powered cars slightly quicker acceleration in any type of driving. The drawbacks of a higher gear ratio are slightly increased gas consumption and engine noise.

If excess engine noise is a problem, some cars have optional sound insulation packages costing between \$80 and \$160. This is offered on some base-model Chrysler vehicles in addition to the Renault Alliance.

Smokers and others who might like better ventilation in their cars can purchase pivoting front vent windows for about \$80 on some Ford and Mercury models.

Motorists purchasing Ford Thunderbirds who don't like to check the engine oil the old-fashioned, messy way - by opening the hood - can purchase a dashboard engine-oil warning light.

In addition to spending extra money on options, new-car buyers

can sometimes save money by removing equipment, such as radios. Buyers who plan to install their own stereos can save about \$80 by taking the radio "delete option" if available.

The HAC explains these are only a few of the long list of specific factory options available on North American cars. Whether it is your next car, or your next hamburger, there's a good chance that you can have it your way.

Service your engine

Servicing your car's engine at least twice a year, will keep it at peak performance. The Hamilton Automobile Club points out that an out-of-tune car can use 3 per cent to 8 per cent more fuel. Check your owner's manual for specific instructions, and keep the following points in mind:

- Spark plugs must be in good condition.

- Ignition timing should be properly adjusted and the engine's idling speed set to specification. Excessively fast idling wastes gasoline.

- The automatic choke should function properly - one that sticks wastes gasoline.

- The carburetor's air-fuel mixture should be adjusted properly.

- Check the oil level each time you

purchase a tank of fuel, or at least once a month. Change the oil at least twice a year under normal driving conditions.

- Inflate tires properly. Under-inflated tires are a safety hazard and can cut fuel economy by as much as 2 per cent per pound of pressure below the recommended level. Follow the car manufacturer's recommendations.

- Take care of car-care "incidental" that can affect fuel use. For example, a defective radiator thermostat can waste gasoline by extending the engine warm-up time or decreasing the engine's operating temperatures. Malfunctioning automatic brake adjusters can create brake drag, which also wastes fuel.

Try the anti-lock brakes for greater driving safety

Have you ever jammed on the brakes to stop quickly, only to have the wheels lock up and the car skid helplessly as you lose all steering control?

Happily, modern technology has come to the rescue. The anti-lock braking system, a new braking device pioneered in Europe, prevents wheels from locking up - even if the driver hits the brakes with all of his might while driving on an icy road.

Anti-lock brakes are now available on some cars sold in Canada.

The Hamilton Automobile Club explains how the anti-lock braking system works. A computer control pumps the brakes up to 15 times per second, halting the locking and skidding of the wheels. The wheels keep turning, allowing the driver to keep

control over the steering along with maximum braking capability.

The driver feels only a slight pulsation of the brake pedal when the system pumps the brakes. If the system fails, a warning light on the dashboard alerts the driver, and the brakes operate in a standard fashion until repaired.

The system is not foolproof. For example, if driven too quickly, the car still can go into a skid and spin while going around corners. Also, a car with anti-lock brakes will not stop as quickly on slick pavement as it will on a dry road.

The H.A.C. says, manufacturers are currently working on even more advanced systems that, in addition to the anti-locking feature, would eliminate wheel-spin while accelerating.

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