

Tune-ups recommended every 30,000 miles

"In the desire to keep their cars in top condition, do-it-yourselfers tend to needlessly replace spark plugs well before the recommended mileage interval. Yet other important tuneup parts are often neglected when replacement is recommended," says Lee Taylor, Marketing Manager for Standard Motor Products, the leading supplier of replacement ignition and engine control parts to automotive service professionals.

For reliable performance with modern, high-voltage ignition systems, spark plugs, distributor caps, rotors, and plug wires should all be replaced at 30,000 mile intervals, Taylor says. According to Taylor, replacing these parts can prevent some of the following performance problems:

- Erratic idle and hesitation;
- Poor fuel economy;
- Erratic shifting with automatic transmissions;
- Loss of power at high RPMs;
- Failure to pass emissions inspection.

The toll of engine heat

"Engine heat is the main reason why plug wires in particular, as well as distributor caps and rotors, should be replaced every 30,000 miles," Taylor explains. "Plug wires are usually close to exhaust manifolds, where they get baked pretty badly," he adds.

"Also, to satisfy emission standards, normal engine operating temperatures have increased to around 220 degrees for later model cars. The trend to downsized cars has just concentrated this heat in a smaller area under the hood," he notes.

"Under these conditions, it's remarkable that modern ignition components can handle the onslaught of electrical surges at 20,000 volts or more and still perform well for 30,000 miles."

TEST YOUR AUTO KNOWHOW BY TAKING THE CAR CARE QUIZ

A little knowledge about the care of your car can go a long way toward saving money and avoiding the inconvenience of a breakdown. In the following questions, Car Care Council has included several basic points to be remembered in the care and use of one's car. Answers follow the quiz.

1. When an engine overheats it can damage the: (a) valves; (b) heater; (c) differential; (d) transmission; (e) alternator.
2. Tire pressure is affected most frequently by: (a) temperature change; (b) speed; (c) wheel balance; (d) valve leaks; (e) tread wear.
3. When you get your car tuned up you are likely to: (a) have the battery replaced; (b) see an improvement in your gas mileage; (c) hear less valve noise; (d) get new spark plugs; (e) notice fewer squeaks and rattles.

Answers to car care quiz:

1. (a) and (d) are correct. Overheating can burn valves, among other internal engine parts. The transmission also can be damaged because it is cooled from the engine cooling system.
2. (a) and (d) are correct. Tire pressure changes one pound for every ten degree change in air temperature. Tire valve also can be a source of leaks and should be replaced when new tires are installed. Note: Incorrect tire pressure greatly increases tire wear, insufficient pressure affects gas mileage.
3. (b) and (d) are correct. A car that needs a tune-up generally improves fuel economy ten percent or more. Starting dependability, performance and exhaust emissions also are improved. New spark plugs generally are part of a tune-up, since these are the "business end" of the ignition system.

Effects of high voltage

"Modern ignition systems generally operate in the 20-50,000 volt range or higher. That's a lot of juice compared to the 5,000 volt breaker point ignition systems of yesteryear," Taylor remarks.

"Since 30,000 volts can arc a spark an inch and a half, any breakdown in the insulating properties of the cap, rotor or wire can allow the spark to arc to ground before it reaches the plug. This is why it's so important to keep caps, rotors and wires in top notch condition," Taylor emphasizes. "At Standard, we have a proud tradition for supplying these parts to professional automotive technicians with a level of quality as good or better than original equipment," he adds.

"This popularity among professionals doesn't happen by accident. At Standard, we perform exhaustive tests on ignition components to determine the material compositions that will deliver the best possible performance over the longest

period of service," he notes.

"Yet most components in the spark path need replacement at 30,000 mile intervals to avoid overall degradation of engine performance, fuel economy, and exhaust emissions," Taylor advises.

Advice for do-it-yourselfers:

"With a properly functioning modern ignition system, the spark plugs will still be clean after 30,000 miles," Taylor says. However, after long exposure to 2,000 degree combustion temperatures, spark

plugs suffer from erosion, he explains.

"Plugs should be replaced at 30,000 miles because they will be eroded, not because they are dirty," he points out.

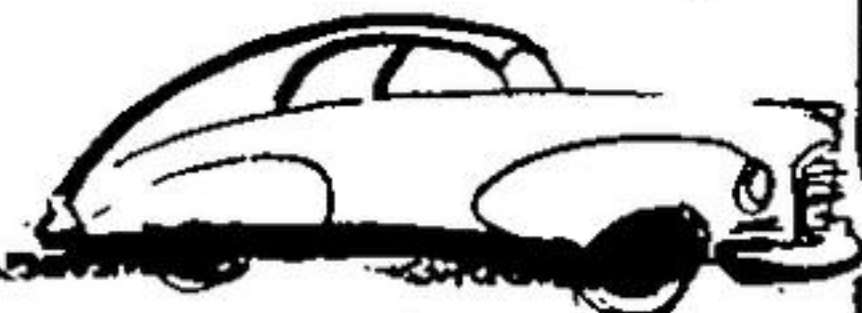
"In a modern ignition system, dirty plugs before 20,000 miles indicate some other problems such as a cylinder blowing oil," he adds.

"A reasonably skilled do-it-yourselfer can certainly replace plugs, plug wires, the distributor cap and rotor himself at the recommended intervals. We always

urge the car-owner to use quality parts from a supplier to the professional community. These parts should meet or exceed original equipment specifications. For instance, any part with the Standard 'Blue Streak' name on it is designed to exceed original equipment standards," says Taylor.

"Yet there are several strong reasons for having this service performed at a reputable service specialist.

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