

Maintaining the coolant system vital to performance

The cooling system in a motor vehicle performs a vital function. It maintains a constant operating temperature in the engine and disposes of the excess heat.

The liquid coolant absorbs the heat in the cylinder block and circulates it into the radiator through the top radiator hose. Here it gets cooled down by air and passes back into the engine block through the lower radiator hose to absorb more heat and to begin the whole cycle again.

Some of the heat is used to circulate through the heater core to heat up the passenger compartment of the vehicle during the cold seasons.

Cooling System Components

The components of a typical cooling system include a water pump, belt-driven from the crankshaft pulley, the radiator

fan, thermostat, upper and lower radiator hoses, the radiator, the radiator overflow tank, the heater core and the heater hoses.

What to check and when

Maintenance of the cooling system is simple, relatively inexpensive, yet very important. Cooling system failure often results from neglect and, apart from creating an emergency, it can cause serious damage to the engine.

Weekly

Check coolant level.

Every Spring and Fall

Check for reasonable cleanliness of the liquid coolant.

Check condition and correct tension of the water pump drive belt (fan belt). Signs of cracks, peeling or glazing suggest an early replacement.

Check condition of the radiator and heater hoses.

Charles Phak



Extreme softness or hardness, cracks or bulges signal an urgent need to replace them.

Carefully remove dead insects, trapped at the front of the radiator core, using a soft brush or a toothpick.

Check for presence of muddy sediments in the radiator neck.

Caution: Never attempt to remove the radiator cap when the engine is hot. The coolant temperature can easily exceed 120 degrees celsius and only the radiator pressure cap keeps it from boiling over, violently.

Check hose clamps but do not overtighten. Damage to the

hoses or fittings could result.

Check for any signs of coolant leakage.

Once every two years

Drain system. While you coolant still protects your system from freezing, its anti-corrosion qualities are breaking down.

There usually is a pet-cock at the bottom of the radiator and a drain plug somewhere in the lower portion of the engine block. To speed up the draining process, the lower radiator hose can be removed at the radiator and pointed downward.

When all the coolant is drained, we are ready to reattach the lower hose to the radiator and to close the drain cock and the drain plug. The system should now be filled with water and the engine run at idling speed for about 20 minutes.

In about an hour after we shut the engine off, things should have cooled down enough to drain the system again. This should have disposed of most of the contamination present.

If there was any sign of cooling system leakage, a pressure check should be performed and the problem corrected, before fresh coolant is installed.

Refilling the system with glycol type coolant of recommended strength will follow the same procedure. Running the engine at idle for 20 minutes and topping up the system several times will allow sufficient time to purge all air pockets.

A routine check of the antifreeze strength every fall should be made without fail.

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