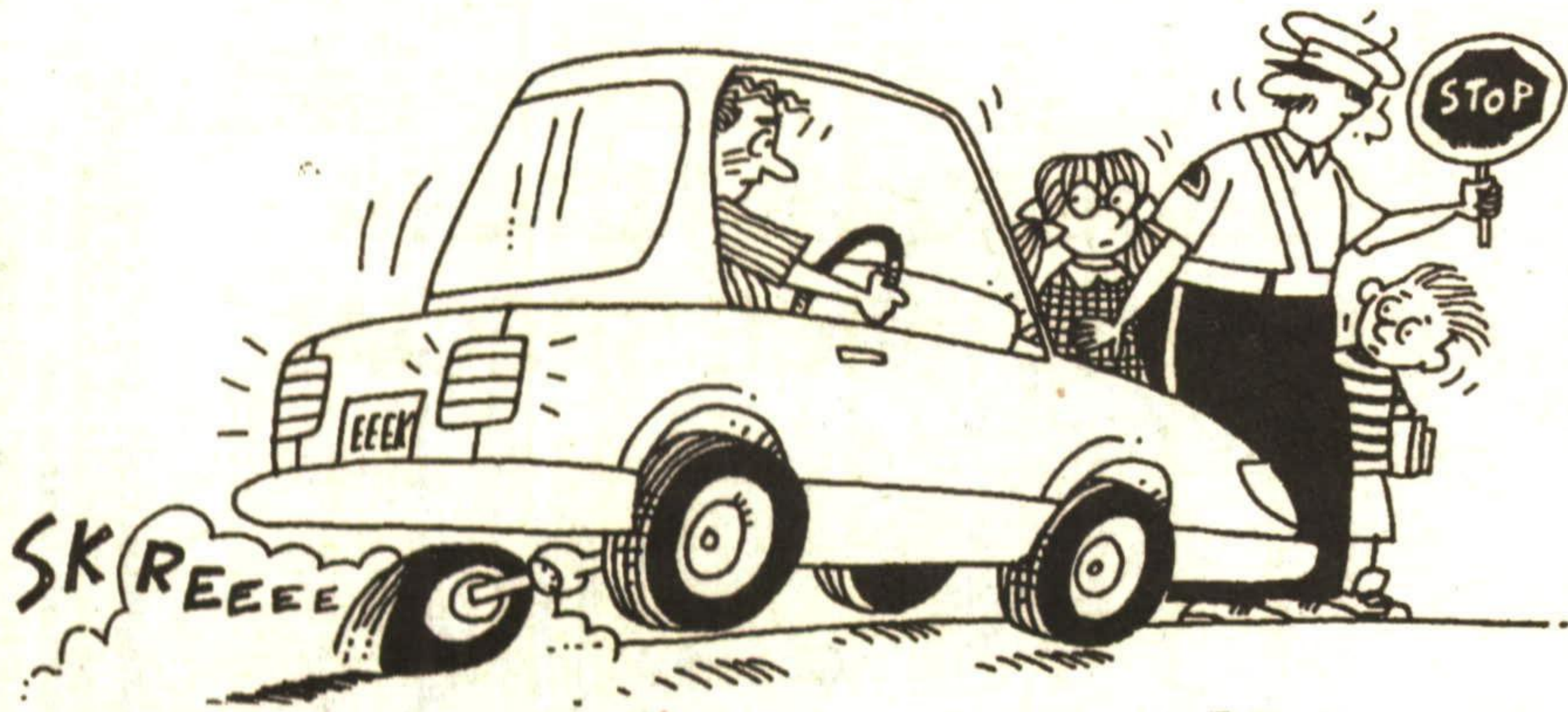


Spring Car Care

Periodic Brake Checks Stem Fear Of Failure



Which car crisis would you fear most: A tire that blows out on the interstate, an engine that goes dead at a busy intersection or a brake pedal that goes to the floor in a panic stop? All of the above could have serious consequences, but brake failure, according to a national survey, is the car crisis most feared by drivers.

Not surprisingly, brake failure is the leading mechanical cause of traffic accidents and, according to the Car Care Council, it's nearly always preventable with proper maintenance.

Brake system care begins with periodic checks. If your car is 18 months old or if it has been 18 months or more since you've had major brake work done, it's time for a checkup. If you do a lot of stop-and-go driving in traffic or if you tow a trailer, brake inspection should be done annually.

A complete inspection requires raising the vehicle and removing all four wheels for examination of brake linings, pads, drums and rotors plus wheel cylinders. The best time to do this is when you're getting an oil change or

the tires rotated, suggests the Council. But don't wait for a convenient time if you suspect some kind of braking disorder. Have it checked at once.

- If it's necessary to top off the fluid in the master cylinder reservoir, look for a leak. When you're out of fluid, you're out of brakes!
- When replenishing brake fluid, pour from a fresh can. Once a can has been opened it can be contaminated by moisture. Water in the braking system can cause serious problems.
- Be aware of unusual braking symptoms, noises, shudders or pulling to one side or another. Have an expert road test the vehicle and help determine if repairs are needed.
- When having brake work done, buy the best; compromising quality in safety maintenance is foolish, comparable to shopping for the lowest price when seeking health care. The quality of one's braking system can have a direct bearing on one's health.

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