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Fluid leaks cause for concern

Remember the anxiety you felt the first time you noticed that puddle of water under your car at a rest stop during vacation? What a relief to discover it was only condensation from the air conditioner.

That's about the only kind of fluid leakage that doesn't warrant concern, says Car Care Canada of the Automotive Industries Asso-

ciation of Canada. Any other drip or puddles are omens of potential car trouble, even a safety hazard.

A common practice is to put up with a minor leak until it's convenient to get it fixed, especially when you are away from home. Delaying such repairs, which often involve nothing more than tightening a hose or replacing a gasket, can be costly.

The best way to find or prevent leaks is to keep the engine clean and check under and around the vehicle periodically for spots indicating leaks. Keeping gaskets, hoses and connections in good condition will prevent most of such problems from occurring.

In your own driveway it's relatively easy to locate and identify a leak. At night you can spread paper under the suspicious spot for closer scrutiny the next morning.

In a rest stop or parking lot, however, you first have to determine if the leakage actually has come from your vehicle. It could be from the one which previously sat in that space.

Your next challenge: to identify the fluid. Colour and texture are your main clues.

Green or yellowish water near the engine is antifreeze.

Red fluid comes from the automotive transmission or the power steering (although they are not the same).

An **oily liquid**, usually without much colour but with a pungent odour, is likely to be brake fluid.

A **thin fluid smelling like gasoline** probably is just that. Leaking oil, antifreeze or gasoline around an engine is hazardous, the latter being a leading cause of car fires. You may need to repair a gas leak before starting the engine.

Chick fluid levels frequently on a long trip, especially if there is a possibility of a leak.

Caution: Never remove the radiator cap when the engine is hot. You could be scalded.

No one wants to look for trouble on a long trip, but an occasional check under the hood and around the car at a rest stop may prevent real trouble down the road.

Winter takes toll on wipers

The passing of another cold, dreary winter means that you, as a driver, no longer have to contend with icy driving conditions that can make roads dangerous.

However you're not in the clear yet. The effects of all that winter driving have probably taken their toll on the rubber edge of your car's wiper blades.

Do you remember those times when you waited impatiently for the wipers to clear the frost from your windshield while the car was warming up? Imagine scraping your knuckles across that same frosted windshield, and you can understand the abuse your wiper blades sustained.

Road film, dirt, salt, petroleum products and the additional pollution in the air all contribute to the deterioration of the rubber wiping edge of wiper blades.

Here are some helpful wiper-blade tips:

- Windshields contaminated with waxes and oils will not allow windshield wipers to perform properly.

- Many types of windshield wipers actually will lift off the windshield at highway speeds. Use wipers designed with aerodynamic features to improve wiper performance at high speeds for clearer driving vision.

- Improperly performing windshield wipers that skip across windshields create annoyances and distractions that interfere with safe driving conditions.

- Inspect wiper blades every six months. Replace when worn, damaged or malformed.

- Ninety per cent of all driving decisions are based on vision. Properly operating windshield wipers can improve vision for safer vehicle operation.

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Acton Auto Tech takes 'Silver'

Acton Auto Tech recently was awarded second place in a province-wide Auto Pro dealer competition.

The Main Street service shop, which won the Bronze prize last year, took the Silver award in the Over-seven-bays category.

"Our customers in Acton have been just fantastic - they're the reason for our success," explained owner Floyd Foster on Monday.

Some 290 automotive service stations in Ontario are Auto Pro dealers, meaning they offer lifetime guarantees for work on brakes, mufflers, front-ends, suspensions and front-wheel-drives.