

SPRING CAR CARE

Environment-friendly car care tips

Car care is a win-win situation, says CarCare Canada of the Automotive Industries Association of Canada.

Besides helping the environment, a properly maintained and operated vehicle runs better, is safer and should last up to 50 per cent longer. The following tips can put you on the road to environmentally conscious car care:

- Keep your engine tuned-up – a misfiring spark plug can reduce fuel efficiency as much as 30 per cent. Follow the service schedules listed in the owner's manual. Replace filters and fluids as recommended. You'll help cut down on air pollution too!

- Check tires for proper inflation. Underinflation wastes fuel – the engine has to work harder. Wheels that are out-of-line (as evidenced by uneven tread of vehicle pulling) also rob energy. And properly maintained tires last longer, meaning fewer scrap tires have to be disposed of.

- Do-it-yourselfers: dispose of used motor oil, anti-freeze/coolant, tires and old batteries properly. Many repair facilities accept these items, or call your local government for recycling sites. Never dump used oil or anti-freeze on the ground or in streams.

- If you are not a do-it-yourselfer, find a good technician. Ask friends and associates for recommendations. Check the shop's reputation with your local consumer group.

- Keep your air conditioner in top condition and have it serviced only by a technician certified competent to handle/recycle refrigerants. Air conditioners contain CFCs – gases that have been implicated to the depletion of the ozone layer. These gases can escape during improper service and repair, so it's important to choose a qualified technician.

Good driving habits are also important. You can get the most out of your vehicle while minimizing environmental change. Here are some fuel-saving tips:

- Obey speed limits. Mileage decreases sharply with high speed.

- Drive gently. Avoid sudden accelerations and jerky stop-and-go's. Use cruise control on open highways to keep a steady speed.

- Avoid excessive idling. Shut off the engine while waiting for someone. Today's vehicles are designed to "warm up" fast, so for-

get about those five-minute warm-ups on cold winter mornings.

- Remove excess items from the vehicle. Less weight means better mileage.

- Plan trips – consolidate daily errands to eliminate unnecessary driving. Try to travel when traffic is light to avoid stop-and-go conditions. Join a car pool.

Remember, how your car runs, how you drive it and how its fluids, old parts and tires are disposed of effects your vehicle and the environment.

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