



When should you wash your car?

From the time when an automobile is first transported to the dealer, metallic railroad dust, road grime, tar oil, bugs, salt, acid rain and countless other elements all take their toll on a car's delicate finish.

We usually think of washing the car only in the winter to prevent corrosion caused by winter salt, but did you know that immediately after a rainfall is one of the most critical times to wash your car?

That's right, even the lightest shower could cause irreparable acid rain damage to your vehicle's beautiful finish, if not quickly cleaned at a professional car wash.

"Acid rain damage is caused when high concentrations of emissions from fossil-fuel-burning engines or plants react with your car's paint to form sulfuric and nitric acids," says Dan Palenske, president of the International Carwash Association (ICA).

He adds, "The result of this process is the penetration and etching of clear-coat finishes, whose protective qualities will then eventually corrode, exposing the paint to many harmful, corrosive

elements. A car with bad acid rain damage could be devalued by up to \$1,000 at trade-in or resale time."

Although you can't prevent acid rain, you can keep it from ruining your car's finish by removing it as soon as possible at a professional car wash, advises Palenske.

New cars are treated with what's known as a "clear-coat finish," which is nothing more than a layer of paint without color pigment. Palenske likens this to sunscreens that protect our skin from the sun's damaging rays. Just like removing sunscreen exposes your skin to the sun's harmful rays, if the clear-coat finish is damaged by acid rain, it can no longer protect the car's painted finish.

This is why it's important to visit a professional car wash frequently, and especially after a rainfall. Keeping your car's finish in the best possible condition is of vital importance in maintaining and preserving the overall appearance and value of the car.

A broken engine part — even the entire engine — can be replaced, but once the body is destroyed, the car is worthless.

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