

INDEPENDENT / FREE PRESS

# Spring Car Maintenance

## Have your car checked before travelling takes its toll

Before you take to the roads this summer and head off to your favorite vacation spot, make sure your car has been checked closely. A breakdown can make your time away much more expensive and a lot less fun.

An important part of vehicle safety is "roadability" or "ride control," the ability to hold the road when cornering or maneuvering in traffic at high speeds. This is especially important when you're driving with your loved ones.

To have the best control, the car's tires must stay in firm contact with the road, which means having tight steering and suspension, strong shock absorbers and struts, and good

tires. Have your shocks and struts inspected to make sure they are properly aligned and in good condition. Check tire pressure to make sure each tire is at the recommended level. Not only will underinflated tires reduce ride performance and handling, but they also will decrease your vehicle's fuel efficiency.

The braking system is the most critical safety system on your car, so have it carefully inspected before taking any long trips. Whether you do it yourself or have it done by a professional, the inspection should check: pads and shoes for lining wear; all wheel cylinders; calipers, drums and rotors; all hardware; brake lines and hoses for leaks,

kinks or blockages; and the brake-fluid level. When it comes to repairing brakes, insist on quality parts from a reputable source. Don't skimp on your family's safety.

When you're on the highway, the last thing you want is your car to overheat and the engine light to go on. Overheating can cause serious damage to cylinder heads and is a leading cause of mechanical breakdown. To save yourself expensive repair bills, have your vehicle's cooling system — especially the thermostat, hoses and radiator pressure cap — checked.

Nighttime driving in an unfamiliar area is difficult. With rain and smearing, streaking

windshield wipers, you're putting yourself and your family in a potentially dangerous situation. If your car's windshield wipers aren't clearing the window properly, replace them before leaving for vacation. Make sure you buy the right type and size, and know how to install them. Read the instructions on the package before leaving the store, and if you don't understand, ask a salesperson questions.

Have your car checked before you go on vacation, and you can help prevent expensive mishaps.

You'll also have one less thing to worry about, making your road trip even more enjoyable.

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