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COME IN FOR A FREE ROAD TEST & COMPUTER SCAN
(where applicable)



Neil Pirie

Check under your vehicle

Continued from pg. 4

A look around underneath your vehicle— don't actually get under there unless you have the right equipment and knowledge— might reveal a muffler or a hidden part of the body that has been damaged by road debris. Also look for fluid leaks, particularly from the brakes, and under the engine and transmission.

Now, after checking tire pressures, take it for a short test drive. We tend to compensate for developing problems, so adopt an analytical approach when you do this. The brake pedal should feel firm and not move more than a centimeter or two. If travel is excessive, if you have to pump the pedal, or if the car pulls to one side have the vehicle inspected immediately.

Simply driving in a straight line while holding the wheel lightly can alert you to alignment problems. There shouldn't be any side-to-side wander, or pull under braking. If steering response isn't direct and linear and if body roll and reaction to bumps doesn't feel controlled, or if you hear any clunks or clonks, components may be worn or have been damaged by winter road conditions.

There's no sense in putting more dry-road kilometers on those winter tires that kept you safe than is necessary, as this can rapidly reduce their effectiveness. And you should never use winter tires all-year round as they won't provide the same level of traction as summer tires, particularly if they are part worn. Hot weather highway travel

can cause their coarser treads and soft compounds to overheat possibly leading to failure.

If you're re-using last year's summer tires have the person installing them check them carefully for tread wear, damage and balance. If you've kept your summer tires mounted on your "good" alloy rims and are installing them yourself ensure they are inflated to the correct pressure and lug nuts tightened to the correct torque.

Check winter tires for damage before storing them, preferably in plastic bags and out of any direct sunshine, so they won't present you with any surprises next fall.

If you didn't replace your windshield wipers last fall, a hard winter will certainly have seriously reduced their effectiveness. If you replaced wipers with the winter type you'll want to switch back to the summer variety.

If you're not sure about any of the things you may have discovered on your spring inspection have them checked out by a properly trained service technician.

It's a good time to go and see him or her anyway, for that spring oil change and tune-up, or just for the peace of mind of having a pro check to make sure you didn't miss anything that will cause problems during the (hopefully) long hot summer. And speaking of that, an annual inspection of your air conditioning system is also recommended, certainly for older vehicles.

For more information on vehicle maintenance at Car Care Canada's web site at www.carcarecanada.ca.

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