

2006 National Car Check events show 78 percent failure rate

The results from the National Car Care Month car check events (May 2006) are in and they couldn't speak louder for the need for regular vehicle inspections and maintenance.

The results show a 78 percent failure rate, which underscores the need for consumer education, according to Car Care Canada. The inspection lanes, conducted across Canada last spring by volunteers from local repair shops, are part of the public awareness campaign, "Be Car Care Aware."

"This pilot project was launched in the spring to provide a free service to consumers and to also gauge the condition of vehicles on Canada's roadways," explained Marc Brazeau, executive vice president of Car Care Canada. "Obviously we need to educate the public about the need for regular vehicle maintenance so people can start taking action to reduce vehicle neglect. A 78 percent failure rate is too high."

The potential effects on road safety, air quality, cost

of operation, vehicle performance, and vehicle dependability are self-evident from these results. Here are the startling results:

- 20 percent of vehicles failed the inspection because of low, overfull or dirty motor oil. Fifteen percent failed the washer fluid inspection. Low fluid levels can affect the safe driving performance of the vehicle and damage internal parts if not properly maintained.

- 16 percent of the vehicles inspected had one or several of the following

problems: low levels of coolant in the radiator, low coolant levels in their surge tank, needed a coolant flush, which is needed to protect the system from rust, dirt and mineral deposits, coolant leaks. The cooling system protects against damage by keeping the engine operating within the correct temperature range.

- Just over one-tenth of vehicles (12 percent) had windshield wiper failures.

- 13 percent of the vehicles checked needed new air filters. The air filter keeps abrasive dust, dirt, bugs and

other foreign matter out of the fuel system air intake. A dirty filter can decrease gas mileage and increase emissions.

- Battery cables, clamps and terminals were found to need maintenance in 10 percent of the vehicles.

- Almost a fifth of the vehicles (18 percent) were found to have improperly inflated tires. Low tire pressure decreases gas mileage and tire life. Vehicles traveling with worn tread are at greater risk of losing traction on wet or snowy roads.

- The majority of vehicles

inspected had working lights on their vehicle which is good news for all drivers on the road. Vehicle lighting provides a means of communicating among drivers and is vital to any properly functioning vehicle.

Car Care Canada plans to continue the car check events through its participating shops to help raise awareness of the need for regular maintenance. For more information about vehicle maintenance and safety, visit the Car Care Canada website at www.carcarecanada.ca

500 Million litres of wasted gas? It's a drop in the bucket!

Loose gas caps, under-inflated tires, faulty thermostats, worn spark plugs, malfunctioning engine controls, poor wheel alignment and the list goes on. These are among the conditions that daily cost consumers millions of dollars in wasted fuel.

"Something as innocuous as an improperly tightened gas cap, for example, or one that's missing or defective, might seem a minor factor,"

says Car Care Canada's Marc Brazeau. "But consider that 17 percent of the vehicles on U.S. highways have either misused or missing gas caps, causing 147,000,000 gallons of gas per year to vaporize into the atmosphere (source: Service Tech Magazine, September 2000). Canadians tend to better maintain their vehicles, but even then, Car Care Canada estimates that there would be 22 million

litres of gasoline wasted each year."

"To the maxim 'waste not, want not,' we need to add 'be car care aware,' because most drivers are unaware of the economic consequences of neglected maintenance," Brazeau says. The 22 million litres of gas out of the filler cap are literally a drop in the bucket of waste.

"Among the six worst offenders are under-inflated

tires and incorrect wheel alignment, conditions which increase rolling resistance. Like driving with the parking brake not fully released, it can cost a kilometre or two per litre on an average car. "Among other gas guzzlers," says Brazeau, "are dirty oil; a slipping automatic transmission, and a cooling system thermostat that causes the engine to run too cold.

"Finally, there could be a

malfunction of one or more components in the fuel, ignition or emission control systems, especially critical in cold weather driving. The fuel penalty for just one misfiring spark plug is 1 mile per litre.

"Combining all of these discrepancies into one vehicle, the cost of wasted fuel easily could exceed recent increases in pump prices," says Brazeau. "It's what being car care aware is all



about."

Not only will maintaining your vehicle save you money, it will also help you to protect the environment by reducing emissions. For more information on vehicle maintenance and fuel saving tips visit www.carcarecanada.ca.



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