

ADVERTISING FEATURE

# WHEELS

## To prolong the life of the exhaust system, reduce the number of trips you make

You're driving along in that economical little car, and it sounds like a fleet of gravel trucks, but it doesn't have to be that way.

According to Car Care Canada, the main cause of falling mufflers is simply a broken clamp. These can usually be replaced for what amounts to small change, compared to the cost of a new exhaust system.

One warning sign is a clunking noise when you start to drive away. Just as you start to roll, you'll hear a series of clunks — you probably need a clamp tightened or replaced.

That sound is the exhaust system bouncing against the underside of the car, and it's a good idea to get it fixed before something breaks off.

Every time you have your oil changed, make sure the technician checks the exhaust system too. It only takes a few seconds to give it a quick look and a wiggle to make sure everything is firm and tight.

Have you ever seen a car driving along the highway trailing a stream of sparks?

It looks (and sounds) like the rocket ship from an old Buck Rogers TV show, but it's no joke. If there is any leak in the gas tank, those sparks could make things really interesting for the driver and for other people nearby.

Even if there is no leak, there's a chance that the pipe

could catch something and turn into a spear, destroying the gas tank or parts of the suspension.

Of course, most problems are less dramatic. Often, it's a mere pinhole in the system. This, too, can be a danger as carbon monoxide — colourless, odourless, and potentially fatal — can leak into the passenger compartment.

Exhaust system manufacturers have made a lot of progress, using more stainless steel (which is corrosion resistant) and more integrated systems (so there are fewer parts to separate or break off) to eliminate this problem as much as possible, but corrosion is still a possibility.

One of the things that drivers can do to prolong the life of their exhaust system is to reduce the number of short trips they take.

If you have several things to do, save them up and make one longer errand out of several smaller ones. That way, your car (and your exhaust system) will warm up, saving fuel, reducing tailpipe emissions, and eliminating the water in your exhaust that tends to cause corrosion from the inside out.

What's in an exhaust system, anyway? It includes a muffler, which feeds the engine noise through a series of baffles to make it quieter, a catalytic converter, which reduces the tailpipe emissions, and piping that connects these elements to the engine. Some systems also contain a resonator, so your car sounds more like a mean muscle machine and less

like a sewing machine.

Catalytic converters do wear out. Sometimes, they can be destroyed — for example, long periods of idling may cook the catalyst because the temperature in the exhaust will rise without any compensating airflow to cool things off. So if you want to avoid a rumble, take good care of your exhaust system. Like so many other things, taking a little time to check can help you avoid big troubles and big expenses.

**THE CARS THAT HAVE A TRAIL OF SPARKS BEHIND THEM LOOK AND SOUND LIKE A ROCKET SHIP FROM AN OLD BUCK ROGERS TV SHOW, BUT IT'S NO JOKE. IF THERE IS ANY LEAK IN THE GAS TANK, THOSE SPARKS COULD MAKE THINGS REALLY INTERESTING.**

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