



"Keeping up with Technology for another 60 Years"

FALL 2010 NEWSLETTER

written by Jack Skibo—Owner

What to do when your Car reaches 100,000 Miles

Reprint from Associated Press / Melissa Rayworth

It was once a huge red flag: When a car's odometer would hit 100,000 miles. But thanks to improvements in car design and maintenance, the milestone of 100,000 miles now means something very different. What allows one car to pass the 100,000 mile barrier with few repairs, while another is ready for the junkyard? It's all about preventative medicine / maintenance.

"It's just like when you get to be 70 and everyone tells you the same thing: Exercise, eat right, take care of yourself," says Lauren Fix, author of "Lauren Fix's Guide to Loving Your Car". Feeding your car the right things and taking it for regular check-ups will make all the difference.

Open the Book

The key to keeping your car running smoothly is probably tucked away in your glove compartment, under the spare napkins and ketchup packets. It's the owner's manual, which most people ignore at their peril. "There is a schedule in the manual that runs well over 100,000 miles," says Fix, and it lists when to replace parts likely to be wearing out. The list will vary for different cars, so check yours and follow it.

"Things like the water pump and timing belt should be changed before you notice a problem," says autoeducation.com founder Kevin Schappell. Replacing them is not inexpensive, but "if that belt brakes you are at least stranded and at worst possible major engine damage, or if the water pump fails, you can overheat the engine causing even more engine damage," says Schappell. That's when things really get expensive.

"Typically, around 100,000 to 120,000 miles there are some major maintenance things that need to be done," Schappell says, so it's a great time to catch up if you've been lax until now. When you consider the price of a new or newer car, it is not even close, maintain the one you have.

Get Fluent about Fluids

The experts suggest frequent oil changes and fluid checks be done at dealerships or full-service auto centers. The staff at most Quick-change lube shops, Fix says, isn't likely to have extensive training. Often "they just don't have any experience," she says, "so they'll top off things with the wrong fluids or not know when something is badly worn or ready to fail." These mistakes can lead to damage, but the car owner doesn't realize it until well after the discount oil change was done.

Find the Right Shop

"Do your research," says Terry Wynter, ask friends and neighbors, research on line or check on AAA Approved shops. Another good idea is to deal with shops that have been around for a long time. Going back to the dealership may be safe but over the life of the car can be very pricey. Rates at independent repair shops are usually much less and a lot of people prefer dealing with someone that has a lot less overhead to pay, plus independent shops tend to be family run and bend over backwards to help their customers.



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Are Extended Warranties Worth the Cost?

We've all seen the ads on TV, in our email, heard them on the radio and even received those annoying telemarketers in the evening. The question is: Are they worth it?

Before we get into cost, let's talk about coverage. I think it would be helpful if you knew some terms. First of all I'd like to point out that none of these warranty companies cover "wear items." What are "wear items?" Well, they are the things that are expected to wear out and will need to be replaced eventually. Tires, brakes, belts, hoses, tune-up items, filters, coolant, etc. You know, the stuff that needs replacement most often.

Next term you need to learn is "incidental damage." What does that mean? Well, let's say your water pump fails which overheats and damages the engine internally. Sure they'll pay for the failed water pump but not the damage to the engine. Why? Because in their mind, the engine damage could have been prevented had you shut your engine off at the first sign of trouble. The engine problem is "incidental damage" caused by the customer failing to shut off a overheating engine.

So, what do Extended Warranty programs cover? A lot actually, IF you are willing to pay. Extended warranties with good coverage can cost as much as a few thousand dollars. Most offer different levels of coverage at different price points. The price goes up as the

coverage improves. Do your homework and always read the fine print.

I'd like to make a suggestion that may help you think about this another way. Why not make your own extended warranty program? Let's say, hypothetically, that a plan with good coverage up to 5 years or 50,000 miles after the factory warranty expires will set you back about \$2500. Why not set the money aside yourself to pay for any needed repairs that may come up? Chances are, that in that time you won't see any repairs that an extended warranty would have covered anyway and at the end you'll still have some or all of your \$2500. On the other hand though, should something happen, you'll have the money to cover the repairs. I know it's easy to say and putting money aside is hard, very hard. Just remember in essence you are making a bet with the warranty company and they are taking the bet. Just like in Vegas, the odds lie with the house and the odds are, you will lose the bet.

Extended warranty programs are very tempting and almost all of them look good on paper. We all want that "Nothing to worry about feeling", but the facts and coverage are much different. It seems so much simpler to pay the price in the monthly payments. We have dealt with most all of these companies and some do provide excellent coverage at a fair price. Do your homework, read the fine print and weigh the pros and cons. Only then can you decide if purchasing one of these plans is right for you.

Test Your Automotive Term Knowledge

Service Engine Soon or Check Engine Light: (Always check your service manual for warning light meanings) Every manufacturer's warning lights are not the same but most will say "Service Engine Soon" or "Check Engine". This light will come on when something is wrong with the computer control systems. You may not feel anything but it needs to be checked. That doesn't mean pull over and stop, just get it checked soon VERY soon if the light is flashing. There are hundreds of reasons this light could come on, so just because "Uncle Joe's" was something expensive doesn't necessarily mean your will be.

Tune-up: Really this is an obsolete term in this computer control age. The computer makes all the adjustments as you drive. The ignition timing and idle is not even adjustable anymore. The computer does it. The term "Tune-up" means many different things to different people. In the past it meant, "make the engine run better." A running problem is now much more likely to be something other than the parts that are normally changed during a "Tune-up."

When someone tells us they WANT a "Tune-up", our first question is always, WHY? Once we know what you think it means and what your "complaint" is, then we can make sure we are all on the same page. If the car is running in a way that is not right, we can address that specific problem. On the other hand, things like plugs and filters do need to be changed as preventative maintenance. Keeping your car running right and dependable is always our goal.

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Simon



Jeff



Getting the Best Fuel Economy Possible

Tow truck associations report “out of gas” service calls have increased by 40% over the first quarter this year over last year. People are running their tanks lower and not filling up, obviously, because of gas prices. What most people do not realize is that running your fuel tank low, consistently, can also damage the electric fuel pump that is inside the tank. This pump uses the fuel to cool itself, so running low will cause the pump to run hotter, which is not good for the life of the pump. These pumps are not cheap, plus the tank has to come off to get to most of them. Running the tank low once in a while is not going to hurt anything but do it a lot and it will cost you a lot more than just the inconvenience of waiting for a tow truck.

Please do not fall for or waste your hard earned money for any of the gimmicks to improve fuel mileage. “Pills” you add to the tank, “magnets” that align the fuel molecules, super duper air filters, all have been proven worthless by several government agencies, namely “Consumer Reports” and AAA to name a couple. The auto manufacturers spend millions to re-tool and re-engineer to make the car weigh less just to make a model get .01 MPG better. Don’t you think they would be using any of these devices if they really worked? Every time there is a jump in gas prices, it seems that these scams come out of the woodwork.

By the way...higher octane fuel will not help your fuel economy either. The majority of cars on the road

are designed to run on regular 87 octane fuel. Some modified, turbo charged or high performance cars require more octane but normally you are just wasting your money using it unless you modify a production engine to use the higher octane.

Turning you’re A/C off WILL help your fuel economy a little, especially on a smaller 4 cylinder car. The A/C systems designed in the last 15 years are very efficient but still could drop your economy by 1 to 2.5 MPG. BUT... driving on the highway with your windows down will usually hurt your fuel economy much more than running the A/C because of the extra wind resistance. Now if you could drive with the windows up and the A/C off on a 100 degree day, **you are tough** and you would be getting better fuel economy than me.

One small point never mentioned by the pro Ethanol people is a car running on E85 Ethanol (which is made from corn) will get 15-20% less fuel economy. Beside that, the effect of using any kind of potential food to make fuel could have a significant negative impact on world food supplies. Bottom line...no fuel source is without negatives.

I wish I could come up with some solid suggestions to get better fuel economy but there just are no magic solutions. Keep the car you now have in tip top shape, and keep up with its regular scheduled maintenance. New engineering breakthroughs will be coming. It may take a while longer but they will come

Automotive Terms Continue from page 2

30K-60K-90K Services: These are the common miles at which a list of services are due on most cars. All the manufacturers now list a package of things that should be done at a given mileage. 30-60 or 90,000 miles are the biggest services but there are others in between. These services include much more than just changing the oil and filter. All factory recommendations are listed in your owners manual.

Many factory dealerships and independent shops will recommend additional services beyond what the manufacturer recommends. In some cases the manufacturer suggested intervals have been proven to be inadequate. Example, GM just settled a class action lawsuit over their 5 year or 100,000 miles service recommendation for changing their antifreeze. It was discovered that waiting too long was causing some gaskets to fail prematurely, something the aftermarket has known for years.

It is a real challenge to compare apples with apples when phoning for a estimate. Some shops will quote a price based on the manufacturer recommendations but then tell you about the other things after they have your car. Ask for a breakdown of what is included in the service, then you can compare prices fairly.

O2 or Oxygen Sensor: This is one of the main engine control sensors that tells the computer what is happening inside the exhaust. Your car may have as many as eight of these units in your exhaust system, just one not working right will effect the emissions and fuel economy.

Timing Belt: Not to be confused with the normal external drive belt. The timing belt is inside the engine and can not be seen. They have a somewhat predictable life expectancy based on mileage and should be replaced before that mileage comes to pass. Not all engines have these belts, some use a chain that does not need to be replaced regularly.

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What to do When your Car Reaches 100,000 Miles

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Your Type of Miles Matter

It may seem surprising, but highway driving puts less stress on a car than driving around town locally. Highway driving requires less braking and acceleration, plus moisture in the engine and exhaust have time to evaporate. Remember that owners manual! Most all owners manuals will have the maintenance schedule divided into “Normal” and “Severe” sections. Since the vast majority of miles driven are around town, most cars fall under the “Severe” side of the maintenance schedule. Colder climates or hotter climates, sitting in traffic, idling outside a school, towing a trailer or driving in the mountains all put you in the “severe” category. Unless you drive your car more that 15 miles the vast majority of the time always follow the “Severe” schedule in your owners manual.

“Consider using synthetic oils,” says Fix, They “will actually lube the engine better. In fact, GM has mandated special synthetic oils for all 2011 models and most all other manufacturers are expected to follow soon.” Synthetics “cause less emissions, help fuel economy slightly, plus you get better performance,” Fix says, “there are no negatives except it costs a little more.”

On Schappell’s website, autoeducation.com, there are hundreds of posts from readers of how they got 250,000, and even 500,000 miles out of their cars. All say the same basic message, “take care of your car above and beyond what the factory recommends” and “as your car gets older stay on top of repairs even sooner.” Remember to consider what it is going to cost to replace your older car with something newer.