

Car Care Update

What's Stopping You?

There's More To Safe Braking Than Just Your Brakes

(NAPSA)—When it comes to the performance of your vehicle's brakes, the margin of "safety" can often be measured in inches—the few inches you've stopped short of another car or that dog or squirrel darting across the road.

What many vehicle owners don't realize, however, is that braking performance relies on much more than just the brake system. Shock absorbers, struts, tires and chassis components also play big roles in helping you avoid accidents.

Safe braking depends on consistent, firm contact between your tires and the road. Worn shocks or struts, in particular, can prevent this secure contact by allowing your vehicle's wheels to "hop" after hitting a pothole, bump or other hazard.

"When the tires aren't in firm contact with the road, your brakes can't do their job," said car care expert Mark Christiaan, director of product management for Tenneco Inc.'s Monroe® brand of ride control components. "That's why every brake job should also include a careful inspection of shocks and struts as well as steering linkage parts like ball joints and tie-rod ends."

The primary job of a shock absorber or strut is to provide resistance to the wheel's natural tendency to bounce away from road impacts. These components also help limit the transfer of vehicle weight from the rear to



To stay on the road to safety, be sure your stopping system is in good working order.

the front wheels in hard-braking situations. This helps balance the weight over all four wheels for shorter stopping distance and improved stability. Tenneco estimates that shocks and struts provide an average of 21 million of these stabilizing actions every 12,000 miles.

"Shocks and struts are obviously wear-intensive parts and should be inspected and replaced as part of normal vehicle maintenance," Christiaan said. The independent Motorist Assurance Program now recommends replacing worn shocks and struts every 50,000 miles.

For more information on how shocks and struts can affect vehicle braking distance, visit www.savingsquirrels.com.