

Be Car Care Aware™

Beware The Perils Of Potholes

(NAPSA)—As the ravages of winter subside and temperatures rise, there is probably a pothole out there with your name on it, cautions the Car Care Council. Record cold temperatures, snow and rainfall in many parts of the country have created the perfect storm for the motorists' dreaded "perils of potholes period."

Most drivers know immediately when they hit a pothole. The heart-stopping, teeth-jarring noise is hard to mistake. It's not always immediately clear, however, if it hurt the vehicle or how much.

Hitting a pothole can damage tires, wheels, steering and suspension, wheel alignment and more. Motorists who experience any of the following warning signs after hitting a pothole should have a professional technician inspect the vehicle.

Warning Signs

- Loss of control, swaying when making routine turns, bottoming out on city streets or bouncing excessively on rough roads. These suggest the steering and suspension—key safety-related systems—have been damaged. These largely determine your car's ride and handling. Key components are shocks and struts, the steering knuckle, ball joints, the steering rack or box, bearings, seals and hub units and tie-rod ends.

- Pulling in one direction, instead of maintaining a straight



Most drivers know immediately when they hit a pothole. It's also important to know what to do next.

path, and uneven tire wear. These symptoms mean there's an alignment problem. Proper wheel alignment is important for the life span of tires and helps ensure safe handling.

- Low tire pressure, bulges or blisters on the sidewalls, or dents in the rim. These problems will be visible and should be checked out as soon as possible as tires are the critical connection between your car and the road in all sorts of driving conditions.

Where To Get Help

If you've hit a pothole, the Car Care Council can help you find a repair shop. The council's Web site features a "Find a Shop" locator at www.carcare.org.

The Car Care Council promotes the benefits of regular vehicle care, maintenance and repair to consumers. For a copy of the council's "Car Care Guide" or for more information, visit www.carcare.org.