



CAR CARE CORNER

Driving Less Doesn't Mean You Can Cut Out Maintenance

(NAPSA)—Many drivers might be surprised to learn that even though they are driving less, they may not be maintaining fuel efficiency or extending the life of their vehicle if they don't perform key maintenance.

Data released by the U.S. Department of Transportation shows that, since November of 2007, Americans have driven over 62 billion fewer miles than they did over the same period a year earlier—exceeding the 1970s' total decline of nearly 50 billion miles.

However, even when driving less, there are a few things car owners should do to ensure their best mpg and trouble-free driving.

"If you are driving less and you are deferring maintenance, there are some basic items that you need to give attention to. Without a doubt, the top two are cleaning battery terminals—and generally making sure the battery is in good shape—and making sure tires are properly inflated," said Robert Sinclair, spokesperson for AAA of New York.

The experts at Goodwrench recommend the following four maintenance tips to help keep your vehicle in top condition—no matter how much you drive.

1. Tires—According to the U.S. Department of Energy, underinflated tires can reduce fuel economy by up to 3.3 percent.

That's because underinflated tires can increase rolling resistance and fuel consumption, so make sure tires are inflated according to manufacturer's recommendations.

Here are a few simple tire maintenance tips that can im-



Experts say even if you are driving less than you used to, you should still take time to clean your car's battery terminals and check the tires.

prove fuel economy and identify problems before replacement is needed:

- Conduct a visual inspection of the tires periodically and check for uneven wear or excessive tread wear.
- Check inflation pressure at least once per month and adjust as necessary.
- Properly rotate tires at recommended intervals and align and balance, if necessary.
- Keep manufacturer-recommended tires on your vehicle.

2. Batteries—Check battery life, replace or charge your current battery and make sure battery cables are corrosion-free.

Driving less or parking a vehicle for an extended period of time can negatively affect battery life and efficiency, especially if a vehicle has a digital display/clock or security system that's always on. When a car is being driven regularly, the alternator recharges the

battery, but when stationary, these electronic systems simply serve as a slow drain on the battery.

3. Fluid levels—Fluids such as engine coolant, transmission and power steering fluid, engine oil and even wiper fluid may leak or deteriorate whether a vehicle is being driven consistently or not.

Check all fluid levels before going on any extended trip or if a vehicle has been sitting for a long period of time. Drivers can get a more accurate dipstick reading by waiting a few minutes after turning off the engine and making sure the vehicle is on level ground.

4. Exterior conditions—In colder weather, it is especially important to check exterior conditions of a vehicle if it's sitting outside. Don't let leaves or snow pile on top of a vehicle. Leaves can clog air intakes, and piles of snow increase drag and decrease gas mileage. Also, scan the ground under the vehicle where it's been parked to see if any fluids have leaked, creating a puddle.

Experts recommend that drivers do not delay critical repairs or replacements needed by any system in your car.

Goodwrench has expert Automotive Service Excellence (ASE)-certified technicians and advanced GM technologies, such as OnStar Vehicle Diagnostics, Tire Pressure Monitoring Systems (TPMS), GM's Oil Life System, Goodwrench Remote Diagnostics and Simplified Maintenance Schedules, which help GM owners take the guesswork out when critical services need to be performed.

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