## **Automotive Answers**

Make The Car Your Top Priority When Planning A Road Trip

(NAPSA)—How well you prepare your automobile is possibly the most important factor in ensuring a safe, fun, carefree and relaxing vacation. Before you hit the open road, there are several important parts of your car to check.

"The most critical areas to check before going on a driving trip are engine fluids, radiator hoses, belts, tires and brakes," says Pat Goss, car care expert, cohost of PBS' MotorWeek and head auto technician at Goss' Garage. "Adequately checking and preparing these key areas before you leave, will not only keep you safe while driving, they'll help prevent costly repairs—and no one wants to spend money fixing their car during a vacation."

Follow these simple instructions and you'll be on your way to a safe, worry-free driving vacation:

 Engine Oil—Before you go on vacation, check your oil levels and the date you're due for an oil change. If you'll be driving long distances, you'll want to have your oil changed before you leave and you'll want to consider the type of engine oil you need for the trip. If you're traveling in hot weather or under severe service conditions such as towing a trailer, you should consider choosing a fully synthetic engine oil such as Mobil 1 with SuperSyn 5W-30 for newer cars or the 10W-30 formula for older and higher-mileage vehicles. Although Mobil 1 is suitable for all services, it is specially



designed to protect engines in hot weather and high-speed conditions, while optimizing your engine's efficiency and reducing oil consumption.

• Radiator Coolant. Hoses and Belts—Have them inspected by a mechanic BEFORE you leave. Keeping an engine running at the proper temperature is extremely important. To make this happen the coolant must be clean and should never change color. If the coolant has changed color, your engine is dissolving into the coolant. Hoses and belts related to the cooling system allow coolant to flow to and from the radiator to keep the engine cool. If a hose or belt fails while driving your engine will rapidly overheat. Overheating can damage or destroy an engine in minutes.

• Tire Pressure and Tread— Most people believe the tire pressure is listed on the tire itself. Actually, the number on the tire is the maximum amount of pressure the tire can safely hold when it's cold. Over inflation or under inflation combined with extreme heat and high speed, can lead to a blow out. So, be safe. Look on your driver's side door, on the inside of the fuel filler door, or in your glove compartment for the recommended tire pressure and check the pressure before you leave. Also, look at the tread on all four tires to make sure it's not too worn or unevenly worn, which can signal a wheel alignment problem or worn front end parts. If your tires are on the bubble in terms of wear, it's best to install new tires now than to take a chance on them failing while you are on the road.

• Brake System—The fluid in your brakes attracts and absorbs moisture. If you haven't had a flush in the last year, get one before you leave. Moisture and brake parts don't mix. Water laden brake fluid causes severe damage to costly brake parts and lowers the fluid's boiling point. A lowered boiling point can lead to brake failure during hard or prolonged brake application, which can be common on long road trips. Heavy traffic and hills seriously stress brakes and brake fluid.

"Finally, keep your speed down, make sure you have a charged cell phone and know whom to call if your car breaks down in a remote area," reminds Goss. "Planning ahead and considering the details before you leave will help you to hit the road safely and with peace of mind."