

Consumer Information from Mid Oregon Credit Union

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Car inspection pays trip dividends

BETHESDA, Md. (6/1/11)--If you plan to hit the long road this summer, schedule a vehicle inspection first to make sure your car is travel-safe and fuel-efficient (*Car Care* May 23).

An inspection could help you avoid injury and having to spend precious vacation time and money on repairs. As an added bonus, an efficient vehicle gives you more miles to the gallon and costs less to operate.

Make sure your safety check includes:

- *Tune-up.* Despite technological advances, car and truck engines still need to be tuned up. Today's tune-up includes replacing filters, checking and filling fluids, changing spark plugs, checking the battery, and checking and replacing hoses and belts. The result: Your engine correctly balances power and fuel economy while achieving the lowest emission levels.
- *Brake disks, pads, and lines.* Brakes are just about the most important safety device on your car. Brake disks should be shiny from the inside to the outer edge, and fairly uniform. If disks need to be replaced, make sure they are replaced in pairs. Pads are cheap; make sure they are at least one-eighth inch thick or replace them. Rubber-coated brake lines should be soft and supple. If you see cracks, or the lines are rigid, it's time to replace them. Inspect the hard, metal lines for corrosion, especially if your car has been exposed to snow and road salt.
- *Tire inflation and tread.* Properly inflated tires are safer, last longer, and provide the best fuel economy. Look for the manufacturer's inflation recommendation on the driver's side door jamb sticker or in your owner's manual. Bulges and bald spots mean you need new tires. Check the tread for uneven wear that indicates the need for a wheel alignment.
- *Battery.* Check for corrosion--white crusty residue around the battery posts. Keep the posts clean, otherwise it will get harder and harder to start your car. There are many good products on the market to help you clean your battery.
- *Gas cap.* Consumers are hard on gas caps: They leave them at the pump, on the car roof, or lose them in ditches by the roadside. Besides protecting from the danger of gasoline spills from recently filled tanks, these small, inexpensive caps can save money in fuel expenses. Check the fit--listen for a hiss when you loosen the cap. A properly fitting gas cap eliminates fumes, gas evaporation, and prevents damage to the fuel system from water, dirt, and other contaminants.

Give yourself and loved ones safe summer travels and peace of mind by scheduling your inspection now.

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