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Lone Wolf Street Rod Club thrives with just one member

BY THERESA BRANDT

The Lone Wolf Street Rod Club has only one car and one member. Jon Lecure and his car make up the whole club in Linn. But that kind of works because the car is fabulous, and Lecure is one-of-a kind. This Vietnam vet loves cars, the older the better.

"I like all cars if they are older than the 1970s," Lecure said. "I used to be into old cars. Then I thought I'd like to get a street rod. Then I kind of decided I wanted to do a custom car."

His current project is a custom 1951 Chevy Bel Air two-door coupe.

"It's not perfect but it's a good old car," Lecure said.

The car features grill parts from an old Dodge that Lecure found and French headlights and a rounded hood that has been customized specifically for the car.

The car has a removable hard top. It has heat and air conditioning, a touch screen radio and a backup camera.

There are interior lights around the cup holders and an automatic antenna.

"I've done a lot of work under the hood with little things that people don't even see," he said.

There is a battery kill switch to make it easier for Lecure to work on the engine and fans that work off a special thermostat to keep the motor from overheating.

He realized that the car needed a new console. Lecure did the design work and planning and his wife sewed it all together and he installed the finished project.

"I think we did a pretty good job," he said. "I like to do little things that maybe other people wouldn't think of."

Lecure's wife is very supportive of his passion for old cars.

"She wants to see me happy and that's really good," Lecure said. "She has always been supportive of me."

Lecure's passion for cars started with a '41 Plymouth Coupe. When he was a junior in high school, he didn't have a car. One day when he was walking to school,

he saw his brother-in-law beating on a car with a ball peen hammer because it wouldn't run. Lecure remembers running up to his brother-in-law.

"Don't hit that car!" Lecure said. "Don't hit that car!"

"If you want this damn car you can have it," his brother-in-law said and threw him the keys.

"Well, I took the keys but there I was stuck with a car that wouldn't run," Lecure said. "A couple of my buddies were walking by and I asked them to give me a push. I turned the key, put it in second and popped the clutch and it fired right up. I drove that car all through high school."

That was Lecure's first car.

"That was kind of the first car I ever worked on and I just figured it out," Lecure explained.

Years later, after Lecure came back from Vietnam, got married and was raising a family, he found another '41 Plymouth Coupe.

"I fixed it up exactly like the one I used to have," he said, proudly.

Over the years, Lecure has worked on a lot of classic cars. There is a wall in his basement filled with pictures of some of the cars that he has built. He points out the '55 Ford that went to Las Vegas. Some of his other cars have sold as far away as Texas and Pennsylvania.

Lecure has to shop around quite a bit to find a new project car.

"It's fun finding a new car," he said.

The car he is currently working on came out of Texas.

"Some of the cars don't look good at all when I find them," Lecure said. "I look at it and I can envision what I think it can be like if I have a chance to work on it."

When asked if the cars always turn out like he imagined, he said, "Always," with a big smile.

"I usually try to find one where most of the mechanical part is down already," Lecure explained. "Then I work on the rest."

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Jon Lecure's current project is a custom 1951 Chevy Bel Air two-door coupe. The car features grill parts from an old Dodge that Lecure found and French headlights and a rounded hood that has been customized specifically for the car.

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What noisy brakes may be telling you

The only noises many drivers ever want to hear coming from their vehicles are the sounds of their favorite songs blasting from their car stereos. But cars sometimes make noises that aren't nearly as inviting as music.

Noises that seem to pop up when applying the brakes can be especially scary for motorists. No one wants to drive a vehicle with faltering or suspect brakes, so learning to distinguish between the two most common brake noises can be a wise move for drivers.

Grinding brakes

The automotive retailer Pep Boys® notes that grinding noises indicate a serious problem with the braking system. According to CarsDirect.com, there are two major causes behind the grinding noise made by brakes. If the grinding sound is audible when pressing on the brake pedal, this is likely because the rotor disc is coming into contact with part of the caliper. This typically occurs because the brake pads or

rotors are extremely worn down, causing the steel backing of the worn out pad to grind against the rotor. In such instances, Pep Boys® recommends replacing the brake pads immediately.

If the grinding noise is audible while the vehicle is in motion, debris might be stuck inside the brakes. Drivers might be able to dislodge this debris by repeatedly moving their cars forward and backward in a safe place, such as a driveway. If that does not work, have the brakes serviced by a qualified mechanic.

Squealing

Many drivers are familiar with the high-pitched squealing sound that comes from their vehicles or those of fellow motorists. That squeal, while certainly not music to the ears, might be a good thing. That's because Pep Boys® notes that some brake pads are equipped with small steel clips that serve as wear indicators. When brake pads have worn down, these devices produce a squealing sound to let drivers

know it's time to get new brake pads.

But squealing can be indicative of other things as well. Squealing noises are sometimes heard immediately after brake pads or rotors have been replaced. In such instances, the noise typically subsides within a day or two once the pads have been broken in.

Glazed pads also can create a squealing sound. When calipers stick, the brakes stay partially applied, producing excessive friction or heat. The heat causes the brake pads to glaze.

No one wants to hear noises coming from their brakes. However, such noises are often a car's way of telling drivers that brakes need to be serviced.

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Lonewolf

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But there are exceptions.

He bought a 1931 Ford Coupe that had no interior, no wiring and the engine wasn't even hooked up. He brought the car home in pieces. He told his wife he had paid \$18,000 for it.

"She thought I was crazy," Lecure said. "She told me I was never going to get it put together."

Three months later he was driving it.

The car had a crease down the passenger side. He took the car down to Schollmeyer's Garage and they did the body work and painted it.

"They charged me \$300," Lecure said. "You know that's been a while ago."

But the Ford wasn't quite fast enough for Lecure and he sold the car after bringing it back to its original condition.

Lecure used to go to a lot of car shows and he has the trophies to prove it.

"I've won a lot of trophies, but I hardly ever go anymore," Lecure said with a shrug. "I don't really need another plastic trophy. They just sit around and get dusty."

Lecure doesn't get too attached to any of his cars.

"If someone wants to buy one," he said. "I'll sell and it get something different."

But like everything else, cars and parts are more expensive these days and harder

to find.

"Everything is getting too expensive," Lecure complained.

Lecure pointed to one of several "Fulton Visors" he has hanging on the wall of his shop.

"That visor was \$75 when I fixed this car up and now it's \$450," Lecure explained. "When I do find them, they are usually beat up. I probably beat on this one for three hours."

Lecure works out of the shop in his basement on the outskirts of Linn. He apologized for the messy garage that isn't messy at all.

"I like fixing stuff and I like making stuff," Lecure said. "I have to keep busy all the time. I get antsy if I don't stay busy."

He points to several old headlight assemblies that he has made into clocks. He also makes rings, walking sticks and fixes old license plates for folks around town.

Lecure learned how to work on cars on his own.

"I've got a lot of friends who know how to fix a car if I don't," he said. "There always seems like there is someone to ask how to do something."

His good friend Donnie Benson helps him out when he has time, and has worked with Lecure on the '51 Coupe quite a bit.

"Somedays I think maybe I'm getting



Over the years, Jon Lecure of Linn has worked on a lot of classic cars. There is a wall in his basement filled with pictures of some of the cars that he has built, including several he has sold to people as far away as Las Vegas, Nevada, Texas and Pennsylvania.

Photo by Theresa Brandt

too old and I'm too tired," Lecure says. "I'm turning 75 this year. That's pretty old when you're trying to get down and work on a car."

Lecure had an injury from his time in Vietnam that recently required surgery, and he also has had back surgery.

"No, I just can't really get under the car

and do it anymore," Lecure said. "It hurts too much. But I still love doing it."

He sometimes uses local shops to help with work he can no longer do. Chris Stuckenschneider in Freeburg and Tony Rankins at B & R Automotive in Linn have both been

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Lonewolf

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a part of his current custom build.

Lecure talked about his time in Vietnam. He showed pictures of himself as a young medic in the Air Force. He recounted that the three-toed sloth he ate during survival training didn't taste too bad, and that a lot of his friends didn't come back.

"Most people when they came back from Vietnam, they wanted to take off like a year to goof off, drink beer and chase women,"

Lecure said. "I was home like five days, and I was just as nervous as can be. I was so used to being busy over there I couldn't stand not having something to do. I'm still like that today."

So Lecure stays busy. He is thinking about selling his custom '51 Chevy Bel Air and maybe getting another car to work on.

"The fun is in seeing if I can do it," Lecure said.



Jon Lecure's custom 1951 Chevy Bel Air (top) features a removable hard top, heat and air conditioning, a touch screen radio and a backup camera, along with interior lights around the cup holders and an automatic antenna. Jon Lecure (above) of Linn is the only member of the Lone Wolf Street Rod Club. He has been passionate about restoring cars all his life.

Photos by Theresa Brandt

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How to reduce vehicle maintenance costs

Major repairs to a vehicle can be expensive. When unanticipated repairs are necessary, drivers' budgets can be thrown out of whack, potentially causing a domino effect that compromises their ability to pay their bills on time.

Whether your vehicle is brand new, a few years old or reaching milestones on its odometer with every mile driven, there are ways to care for the vehicle so you aren't caught off guard by costly repairs down the road.

- **Read your owner's manual.** A vehicle owner's manual is a great resource that can help drivers keep their cars and trucks running strong for years. Every vehicle, whether it's purchased brand new from a dealership or preowned from a preowned dealer or private citizen, should come with an owner's manual. Don't worry if you purchased a preowned vehicle from a private citizen who lost the manual, as many manufacturers have manuals available for free on their websites. Print manuals may cost some money. Drivers may be able to

find their manuals elsewhere online on a site such as Justgivemethedamn-manual.com, which has thousands of manuals from various automakers available. Once you have the manual in hand or on your computer, visit the maintenance section to familiarize yourself with the manufacturer's recommended maintenance guidelines. Adhering to those guidelines is a great way to keep your car running strong for years on end, and it might just save you from the hassle of sudden expensive repairs.

- **Protect the engine.** The engine is arguably the most expensive part of your vehicle to replace, so protecting it should be a priority. Routine oil changes and oil filter replacements is a great way to protect the engine. Manufacturer guidelines vary in regard to oil change and oil filter replacement intervals, but such recommendations can be found in your manual.

- **Hone your DIY skills.** Drivers also can save money on maintenance by doing some of their own minor vehicle repairs. YouTube is home to

many DIY tutorials that can teach drivers how to change their own oil and replace the filters on their vehicles. Routine repairs are relatively easy, and many tutorials can walk you through them step-by-step. Depending on how much you drive, learning to do your own minor vehicle repairs may save you hundreds of dollars per year.

- **Perform routine inspections.** Older vehicles may or may not alert drivers via noises or leaks that they're in need of repair. Routine inspections of hoses, brakes and tires, which should always be properly inflated, can let drivers know if their vehicles are experiencing problems before those problems grow and become something costly.

Vehicle maintenance costs tend to be most expensive when drivers ignore routine maintenance or miss signs that their cars and trucks might be struggling. By adhering to manufacturer maintenance guidelines and paying attention to their vehicles, drivers can reduce the cost of keeping their cars on the road.

Did you know?

In 2012, the U.S. Department of the Treasury studied the effect that getting stuck in traffic has on fuel consumption. Researchers discovered that Americans were wasting 1.9 billion gallons of gas each year due to congested roads and inadequate transportation infrastructure. Although that study was conducted in 2012, it's reasonable to conclude that wasted fuel remains a big and potentially dangerous issue. One way to cut down on the environmental and financial toll of traffic is to find different routes that help drivers avoid traffic jams. Even if such routes are more circuitous, they may end up helping commuters save time and money in the long run. Popular GPS-based traffic apps can guide drivers to less congested roadways by allowing users to set filters to avoid traffic.

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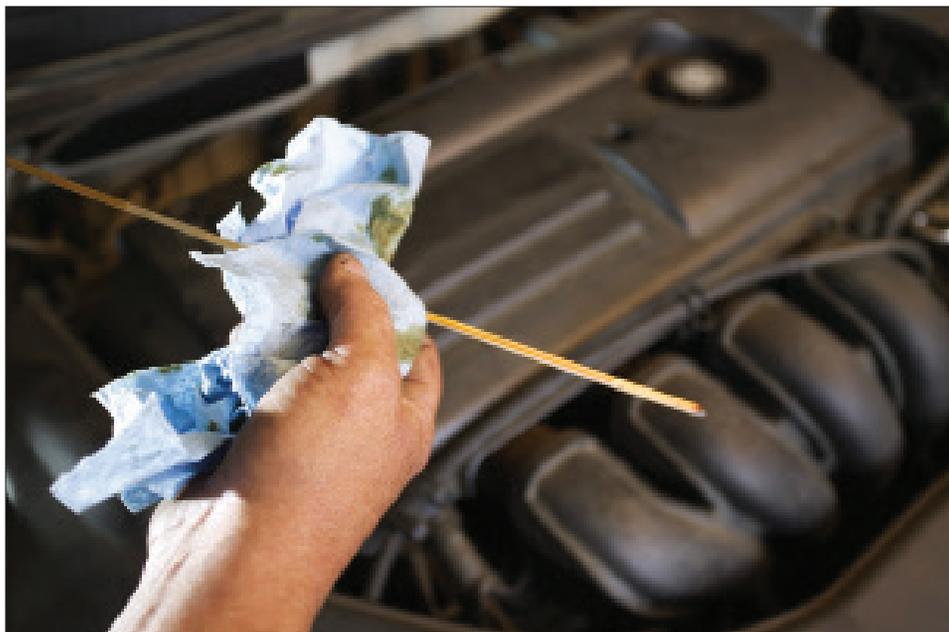
Fluids to check before your next road trip

For many traveling enthusiasts, few things are more enticing than the open road. Road trips have long been popular, and that popularity appears to be on the rise.

According to a report from MMGY Global, a travel and hospitality marketing firm, road trips represented 39 percent of vacations taken by United States travelers in 2016. Road trips also remain popular in Canada, where vast, rugged terrain makes for idyllic trips.

Before embarking on road trips, motorists would be wise to inspect their vehicles to ensure their getaways are not derailed by car troubles.

- **Brake fluid:** Squeaky brakes are not the only potential indicator of brake problems. Brake fluid, which should always be topped off before beginning a road trip, also might shed light on potentially serious problems. According to the National Motorists Association, brake fluid looks honey-like and translucent when fresh. A puddle beneath a vehicle that is clear to brown and slick indicates a brake fluid leak, which can ultimately lead to a complete failure of the brakes. The NMA recommends brake fluid



be changed at least once every three to four years.

- **Transmission fluid:** When fresh, transmission fluid is red, darkening over time. However, transmission fluid should never appear brown or black, which indicates potential internal damage to the transmission. To determine if there are any issues with the transmission fluid, the NMA

recommends drivers wipe a cool dipstick between their thumb and index finger. If even the slightest bit of grit is felt when wiping the dipstick, the transmission is likely in need of work.

- **Oil:** Drivers should change their vehicles' oil before embarking on road trips, especially if such trips will be lengthy. The NMA notes that fresh oil is light to dark amber

and translucent, and that is how oil typically looks immediately after an oil change. Oil darkens over time, and that is natural (black oil indicates it's time for an oil change). However, oil that appears cloudy or milky indicates that coolant is getting into the oil, perhaps due to gasket problems. Drivers who are not getting their vehicles' oil changed before a road trip should at least check their oil before leaving to inspect the color of the oil and ensure the vehicle has enough oil.

- **Windshield washer fluid:** The unknown of the open road is part of what makes it so appealing. While many road trippers plan their trips during the summer and fall when the weather tends to be both pleasant and predictable, there's no guarantee inclement weather won't rear its ugly head. Filling the windshield washer fluid reservoir before embarking on a trip ensures drivers' visibility won't be adversely affected by unforeseen issues that can soil windshields.

Checking fluids before embarking on a road trip can help drivers avoid breakdowns and ensure a safe, fun trip.

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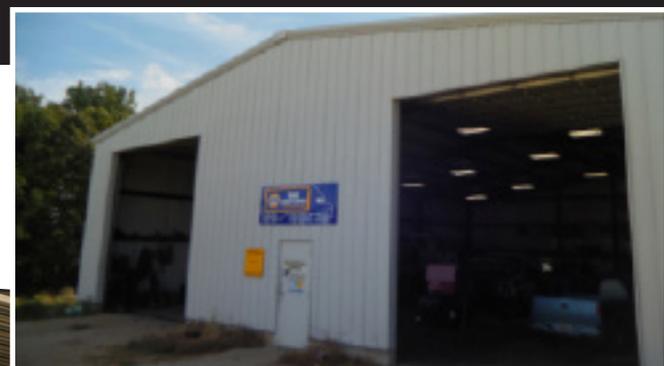
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Unique ways to conserve fuel

Defensive driving has long been touted not only as a safe way to operate a motor vehicle, but also a cost-effective one. When driving defensively, drivers are less likely to make sudden stops or accelerate quickly, each of which can waste fuel.

But even the most conservative motorists might want to do even more to conserve fuel. Fortunately, there are many unique and simple ways to conserve fuel and save money.

- **Park in the shade.** According to Natural Resources Canada, using a vehicle's air conditioning system increases its fuel consumption more than any other auxiliary feature. In fact, NRC notes that air conditioning systems can increase fuel consumption by as much as 20 percent. That's because vehicle AC systems require engines to work extra hard, which in turn requires them to consume more fuel. By parking in the shade on hot days, drivers won't need to crank their AC systems in order to overcome the summer heat.

- **Listen to traffic reports.** It's well known that idling greatly decreases fuel economy. Before leaving for work or to run errands around town, tune in to local traffic reports in the hopes that you can avoid potential traffic jams that contribute to the needless consumption of fuel. If there's no way to avoid traffic during your daily commute, consider investing in a vehicle with stop-start technology, which shuts the engine off when your vehicle comes to a halt before restarting it once you take your foot off the brake. The Union of Concerned Scientists notes that this technology can reduce fuel consumption by as much as 5 percent.

- **Make sure your gas cap is tight.** A loose gas cap can adversely affect fuel economy. According to Napa®, a loose gas cap is a common contributor to poor fuel economy. Loose gas caps allow fuel vapors to leak and that decreases your vehicle's fuel efficiency. After filling up at the pump, be sure to close the gas cap tightly. Many caps will indicate how many clicks it takes to make sure the cap is closed as tightly as possible. In addition, periodically inspect the cap for cracks or leaks, replacing it if necessary.

- **Drive distraction-free.** Today's cars are technological marvels. But all those bells and whistles can be distracting, and distracted drivers are less likely to pay attention to how they're driving. That can make for unsafe and fuel-inefficient driving. When driving, do your best to minimize distractions, turning off your smartphone and directing all of your focus to the road and how you're navigating it.

Conserving fuel is a goal for many drivers, and that goal can be achieved in a wide variety of ways.

How to safeguard your vehicle from the elements

In a perfect world, all vehicle owners would be able to park their cars and trucks in garages. In such a world, automobiles would not be vulnerable to sun, storms and other natural elements that, over time, can contribute to wear and tear.

But many drivers cannot or choose not to park their cars in garages. Some are content to let their vehicles brave the elements, while others look for ways to protect their cars and trucks as much as possible. Drivers who count themselves among the latter group can take these simple steps to protect their cars and trucks from whatever Mother Nature has in store for them.

- **Park in the shade.** Parking in the shade can protect both the interior and exterior of a vehicle. Shaded areas protect upholstery and dashboards inside the car from sun-induced fading, while also limiting the damage sun can cause to exterior paint. Faded paint may hurt the resale value of a vehicle, prompting prospective buyers to walk away or at least wonder if a vehicle with a faded exterior was well maintained.

- **Wash and wax.** Washing and waxing a vehicle helps to minimize damage that's inevitable regardless of where drivers park their cars. Dirt and debris litter roadways, and over time cars can collect a large amount of these unwanted stowaways.

If dirt and debris are not removed, they can cause long-term damage to vehicle exteriors. Washing and waxing a car can ensure its exterior looks good and reduce the likelihood of rust and other corrosion from occurring.

- **Don't write off bird droppings.** Some drivers, especially those who do not park their cars and trucks in garages, may write off bird droppings as an annoying yet harmless side effect of vehicle ownership. However, bird droppings are acidic and, if left to their unsightly devices, can cause permanent damage to vehicle paint. Tree sap is an equally formidable foe, potentially causing scratching because it can be very difficult to remove without spreading. Specially formulated sprays can help drivers remove bird droppings and sap from their vehicles.

- **Employ a car cover.** Drivers who have garages but use them to store things other than their vehicles can use car covers when parking their cars in their driveways. Covers protect cars from the elements and can be quickly and easily removed.

Nature can be harsh on vehicles. Protecting automobiles from the elements should be a priority for drivers, especially those who do not park their cars and trucks in garages.

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Why do brake rotors warp?

Braking systems are comprised of various components, including rotors. Rotors are large metal discs that can be seen behind the wheels of the car. Rotors can sometimes appear to warp, and many drivers may question why this occurs or if this is a significant problem.

Rotors cannot really warp. Automotive experts note that rotors are metal discs that are cast under extreme heat conditions. It would take a similar application of heat by the braking system for rotors to actually bend, which is impossible. Other factors make rotors appear to be warped, so describing such rotors as “warped” is an easy way to explain the problem to vehicle owners.

For brakes to work correctly, brake pads must be applied squarely and evenly against the rotor. But friction can cause some brake pad materials to form residue on certain areas of the rotor, eventually contributing to uneven rotor surface levels. Some spots become thicker, while others may thin out.

Drivers’ own habits, including their braking tendencies, can contribute to uneven rotors. The automotive advice resource Your Mechanic says that riding the brakes for prolonged periods of time can cause hot brake pads to “paint” the

rotors. So constant braking should be avoided.

Drivers also can shift into a lower gear when driving downhill so that prolonged breaking is unnecessary. Also, avoiding frequent hard breaking may help. People who live in an area where they’re hard on the brakes either because of hilly terrain or traffic may find such environments can take a toll on the performance of their vehicles’ brake systems.

Brake system issues, such as front brakes having to work harder than rear brakes, or over-torqueing when wheels are installed, also may cause rotors to warp, advise automotive experts at Kal Tires. Moss Motoring also states that new pads and brake pads need to be fitted correctly and properly “bedded.” Bedding is the initial transfer of friction material from pad to the disc to form a smooth, uniform layer. Break-in instructions should be included with new brake installation.

Warped rotors can cause symptoms such as squeaky sounds and lead to jittery feelings in the car when brakes are applied. Such rotors also can cause the vehicle to vibrate when coming to a stop.

If warped rotors seem to be an issue, mechanics may be able to put thicker

rotors into a lathe to smooth out the residue and restore an even surface — but

the problem can come back. It is usually best to replace rotors if they are causing severe vibrations or issues when braking.



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Signs transmission fluid is low

Vehicles require all sorts of maintenance to operate safely and efficiently. Contrary to popular belief, motorists need not be amateur mechanics to keep their vehicles running strong.

Major vehicle repairs are best left to the professionals, but drivers can learn to identify the causes of relatively minor issues that, if left untreated, can cause significant damage. For example, vehicles may exhibit certain signs of that indicate their transmission fluid needs replenishing. In many of the following instances, drivers may only need to top off the transmission fluid in their vehicles. However, if issues persist, schedule an appointment with a mechanic.

- **Overheated transmission:** Smoke billowing from a car is a sight no driver wants to see. But as bad as it may look, smoke coming from a car may only indicate the transmission is overheating due to lack of fluid. Smoke also can be indicative of a host of other problems, so if transmission fluid levels are not low, consult a mechanic. Loss of power and a burning smell also may indicate low transmission fluid levels.

- **Erratic shifting:** Drivers can notice how their vehicles shift whether

the cars or trucks have automatic or manual transmissions. Transmission fluid may be low if shifts appear to be delayed or faster than normal or if the vehicle appears to be slamming into a new gear. The automotive service provider Aamco notes that shifting issues related to transmission fluid may indicate the presence of a leak. If the issue disappears after refilling transmission fluid but then reappears shortly thereafter, consult a mechanic.

- **Pausing when engaging gears:** A two- to three-second pause when shifting into drive and reverse is another indicator that transmission fluid levels are low. The automotive experts at Firestone note that manual transmissions require fluid to keep gears lubricated, while automatic transmissions rely on fluid to create the hydraulic pressure necessary to power movement within the transmission. When fluid levels are low, shifting from park to drive or reverse can take longer than it should.

- **Slipping transmission:** Vehicles that are not staying in gear also may be in need of transmission fluid. However, a slipping transmission also may indicate significant damage to the



transmission has already occurred, so this issue should be brought to the attention of a mechanic.

Low transmission fluid levels can

contribute to various symptoms. Keeping an eye on fluid levels and recognizing low fluid symptoms can

keep cars running smoothly.

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The importance of routine vehicle maintenance

Owning a car is a big responsibility. Drivers who plan to keep their vehicles for the long haul must emphasize maintenance if they want to keep adding miles to their odometers. In fact, the automotive information site CarAdvice says that routine maintenance may be the most important thing drivers can do for their vehicles.

A vehicle needs consistent care if it is to run efficiently. Maintenance also reduces the risk of roadside breakdowns and costly repairs. Here's a look at some of the benefits of staying on top of maintenance.

- Saves money: Even though maintenance costs money, sticking to a consistent maintenance schedule can save big bucks in the long run. For example, the cost of rotating and aligning tires is considerably less than repairing a car after a major blowout and paying for a tow and tire replacement.

- Improves performance and efficiency: Routine maintenance includes oil changes, filter changes and fluid top-offs. Such tasks keep engines running smoothly. Ignoring this routine maintenance can put engines in jeopardy of breaking down and adversely

affect vehicle performance, diminishing fuel economy and leading to a sluggish ride.

- Identifies safety issues: Routine inspections and work performed by reputable service stations help drivers stay abreast of recalls or issues that can affect the safety of the vehicle.

- Maintains a maintenance record: When the time comes to sell the vehicle, having a log of routine maintenance indicates to potential buyers that the vehicle was well cared for.

- Keeps compliance: Vehicles covered under manufacturer's warranties typically need to be maintained in adherence to factory-recommended maintenance schedules. This ensures that the vehicle is in compliance and will be covered in the event of a warranty claim.

Routine vehicle maintenance is important for a variety of reasons. Drivers can work with a trusted and reliable mechanic to develop a schedule that keeps their cars and trucks on the road.

Stock the car for roadside emergencies

Disasters can happen in a flash, and having a plan in place for common emergency situations can make it easier to handle adverse conditions, particularly when away from home.

According to MFASCO Health and Safety, a supplier of first aid supplies and kits, 90 percent of people do not carry first aid supplies or other emergency gear in their vehicles. Among those who may carry supplies, 30 percent never check to determine if they're in good working order. The National Safety Council says that drivers should always keep emergency supply kits in the trunks or cargo areas of their vehicles. Kits should be inspected every six months, and worn out items should be replaced.

Roadside emergency kits can make the difference between getting back on the road safely or being stranded for hours. Such kits also may help prevent or treat injuries, potentially saving lives. Weather should be considered when preparing vehicle emergency kits, which should include the following.

- A properly inflated spare tire and tire-changing equipment
- Jumper cables
- A multipurpose utility tool and/or tool kit
- Flashlight and batteries
- Flares or triangle reflectors

- An extra quart of motor oil
- A first-aid kit containing at the least, gauze, tape, bandages, antibiotic ointment, aspirin, nonlatex gloves, scissors, hydrocortisone, thermometer, tweezers, and instant cold compress
- A blanket
- A tire pressure gauge
- A portable tire inflator
- Paper towels
- Nonperishable, high-energy foods
- Drinking water
- A reflective vest
- Duct tape
- A fire extinguisher
- An ice scraper
- A folding shovel
- Coolant and washer fluid
- A phone charger
- Baby/child supplies, if pertinent
- Rope

Keep roadside emergency kits organized at all times. Store items securely in a milk crate, box or backpack so they are always readily available. People should familiarize themselves with the items in the kit so they know how to use them correctly and quickly.

With some planning and organization, drivers can have the supplies they will need to make it through roadside emergencies safely.



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Did you know?

The disclaimer “Objects in mirror are closer than they appear” is featured on passenger-side mirrors of vehicles manufactured in the United States, Canada, India, Korea, and Australia. These mirrors are convex, which means they distort the size of objects viewed in the mirror, and as such, distorts the perception of how close or far away objects are from the driver’s car. However, this distortion allows for the reflection of a wider field of view on the side of the vehicle to help eliminate blind spots. In the United States and Canada, driver’s side mirrors are flat or “planar.”

Dual convex mirrors are not currently the norm on vehicles manufactured in North America based on requirements implemented by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration’s Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard 111 and the Canada Motor Vehicle Safety Standard 111. Elsewhere, such as in Europe, dual convex mirrors are included on vehicles. Many automotive companies support having two convex mirrors on the sides of cars to eliminate blind spots, as well as reduce the driver’s need to twist his head to the left when turning or changing lanes. However, flat mirrors have been required to avoid distortion and give drivers the most accurate assessment of traffic to their left for changing lanes, called “unit magnification.”

This may soon change, though. According to a 2013 statement from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, “The agency intends to reevaluate existing side-mirror requirements (FMVSS No. 111) to determine whether convex mirrors should be harmonized with European requirements.” Currently, drivers can modify their driver’s-side mirrors to include a convex mirror add-on, as long as the mirrors also have the required flat portion.

Handle a breakdown with ease

Drivers expect their vehicles to safely transport them from point A to point B. But sometimes drivers find themselves stranded on the side of the road due to a breakdown. That can be an especially precarious position to be in, but knowing what to do during a breakdown can help drivers and their passengers get through such situations unscathed.

1. Find a safe spot to pull over. Whenever possible, guide the car to a shoulder or area out of the line of traffic but still visible to oncoming traffic. If the car is not drivable, enlist the help of someone to push it into a safe zone.

2. Turn on hazard lights. Esurance advises to put on hazard lights, which will warn other drivers that something is wrong. Hazard lights also may alert other motorists who might offer assistance. Once your hazard lights are on, pop the hood, which can serve as an additional alert to other drivers.

3. Engage the emergency brake. Turn the wheel away from the road and put on the emergency brake to help prevent the car from rolling.

4. Set up other warning signals.

Prepared drivers keep cones, reflective triangles or flares in their cars. AARP suggests placing three warning signals. The first should be 50 feet away and directly behind the vehicle. The other two can then be placed nearer to the vehicle.

5. Remain in the vehicle. It is safer to stay in the vehicle and call for help than to get out and stand on the side of a busy roadway.

6. Call for assistance. Use a

mobile phone to dial a roadside assistance service or tow truck. Drivers also may want to contact the nearest police station to ask for help.

Roadside assistance programs are available for a fee from private companies and sometimes through vehicle dealerships or insurance companies. Such services can provide peace of mind if and when breakdowns occur.

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