

# TIME FOR SPRING SERVICE



Ralph Seekins

OK. How much time in any given year do you spend behind the wheel? The 15 minutes a day I spend driving to work and the other 15 spent getting home amounts to about 130 hours a year. And that's not counting weekends or other trips to the store, to church or to other events. So, based on an average 40 hour work week, that means I spend the equivalent of at least 3-1/4 work weeks a year on the road. With all that driving, it sure seems like a good idea to make sure I keep my wheels in good shape. The same applies to all drivers – including you.

Based on the inspections in our Quick Lane Tire and Auto Center, more than 90% of all vehicles on the road have problems that need to be addressed. Those problems include things like low or dirty oil, worn out coolant, frayed or checked belts, improper tire air pressure, corroded battery cables, and dirty air, oil and fuel filters. As a result, now that the hard months of winter are over, it just makes good sense to treat your vehicle to a thorough spring clean-up and check-up.

First, take a few minutes to pull out your owner's manual and follow the recommended service schedules. The most neglected service we find is a simple oil and filter change. Crankcase contaminants build up during cold winter weather when engines commonly take longer to reach full operating temperature. Use the oil your manufacturer recommends and make sure you install a high quality oil filter. A cheap filter is probably cheap for a reason and you don't want to skimp on this vital item. And, one thing to remember is, if you change the oil and filter yourself, make sure you properly dispose of the used oil and make sure you keep a maintenance record and receipts.

The best replacement interval for windshield wipers is twice a year – once in the fall and once in the spring. Then, make sure the washer fluid is full (with plenty on hand for re-fills) to fight our famous Interior Alaska summer dust and the abundant variety of insects that pepper the windshield.

Next, check all the lights and bulbs in and around your vehicle. Somewhere near 15 percent of vehicles we check have at least one light that isn't working. And, interestingly, it seems that those guys and gals with the flashing lights on the roof of their patrol vehicles know the same thing.

Tire pressure and condition should be checked. Improper air pressure robs you of fuel mileage and can cause premature tread wear. Here,

we highly recommend replacing the compressed air in your vehicles tires with more stable, larger molecule nitrogen gas.

Air filters and fuel filters should be checked and replaced if necessary. Dirty air filters decrease gas mileage and dirty fuel filters decrease performance and can cause an engine to actually quit running at all and, as Murphy's Law prescribes, it'll happen at the most inopportune time.

If it's been more than a year since the coolant (antifreeze) has been replaced in your vehicle's radiator, do it now. Coolant should be replaced every other year to make sure you have proper protection is both hot and cold weather.

Belts should be checked to make sure they are neither frayed nor have sections missing and hoses should be examined to make sure there are no leaks and are not "mushy" when squeezed.

Then, while checking these basics, I recommend you check your vehicle's license plate tag and registration to make sure they are up to date. And then make sure you have the proper insurance card on board. This check doesn't affect the safe operation of your vehicle. However, it may save you a lot of money. Good luck and safe driving.

*Ralph Seekins has more than 40 years' experience in the automotive industry. He started as a mechanic, worked in sales, and for the past 32 years, has been the owner of Seekins Ford Lincoln Mercury.*

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