

How to Eliminate Those Costly Repair Bills

Manufacturers Scheduled Maintenance. Pretty simple advice? We've heard this a hundred times. Still most of us still manage to burn out engines or grind brake pads down to the rotors. What's up with that?

According to a recent study, *what's up*, or more accurately, *what's not up* is:

1. Time
2. Forgetfulness
3. An overwhelming fear of automotive service professionals wearing uniforms, armed with automotive stethoscopes and clipboards.

The study indicated that only 28% of respondents perform the factory-specified services described in the owner's manual, and 72% perform services later than scheduled or not at all. The survey also found that the *consistent-service* driver is the exception, rather than the rule.

Surprisingly, the majority (58%) of survey respondents indicated that they either take their vehicles to different garages for different repairs.

Nearly 10% said they are completely unaware of their recommended factory services schedule, and 28% had "no idea" or only a "vague idea" when they're supposed to schedule their next service appointment.

Today's new vehicles are considerably more dependable than ever before. For example, spark plugs used to be a 10,000-mile item; now with the new laser platinum technology they are a 60,000-mile item. Today's cars are more efficient- and cleaner than before. Perhaps this trend toward indestructible cars gives today's motorists a false sense of security. Some people seem to feel as though their vehicle is maintenance free. If so, it's a dangerous way to think. The best way to destruct an indestructible car is by ignoring the simple things, such as oil changes and other necessary maintenance.

Some vehicle manufacturers suggest changing the oil at 6,000 or even 10,000-mile intervals. When your manufacturer's warranty runs out at 36,000 miles, that equates to around 3 -4 oil changes before you're on your own. The scenario might go something like this: (You) *"Hello New Car Dealer, I followed your oil change schedule and my engine seized"* (New Car Dealer): *"How many miles are on your car?"* (You) *"Only 42,000 miles"* (New Car Dealer) *"Gee, what a shame, your car is out of warranty, you should come on down and we'll sell you a new car"* For my money I'd rather change my oil at 3,000 and call it insurance. Money well spent for peace of mind. Better safe than sorry.

These are some tips and recommendations that motorists should follow:

- Read and understand the service part of your owner's manual.
- Always keep to a repetitive schedule. Better yet, find a full service shop that will remind you when those services are due.
- Build a relationship with a full service auto repair shop,
- Take the time to build a rapport with the service advisor. The better you know each other, the more you build a trust relationship with each other.
- If you get your oil changed at a "quick in and out" oil change shop, don't expect the attention to detail your vehicle would get at a quality full service repair shop.
- Don't limit your visit to only the services that the "Quickie" shops don't do. A relationship is built both ways. You have the right to expect "Red Carpet" treatment from your repair shop when you trust them with all of your business.
- Don't hesitate to question the Service Advisor. What, Why, When and How much?
- Know what's supposed to take place - question any procedures.
- Listen for rattles, squeaks, and let your technician know about it in as much detail as possible.
- Do your best to document intermittent problems. That helps speed up diagnosing time and saves you money.
- Remember that the people who work on cars are highly skilled and highly trained automotive technicians - not "mechanics". Today's auto technician uses sophisticated diagnostic equipment, trains constantly to keep up with the ever- changing advancements in automotive technologies. He works on his feet all day in a hazardous environment - and must be versatile enough to do everything from complex repair to changing a tire.

So go ahead. Abuse your car, and steer clear of the auto technician who knows, not only how to fix the problem, but maybe even prevent it from breaking in the first place. It's okay, as long as you understand that your car will abuse you right back -- sooner or later but always at the wrong time