

Car Care Corner

Are You Road Trip Ready?

(NAPSA)—When it comes to “getting away from it all,” many Americans are skipping the pricey trips abroad and opting to enjoy the many amazing, closer-to-home sights from the comfort of their own vehicles.

If you’re planning a getaway, remember that road trips can be tough on cars, and few things turn a vacation into a nightmare quicker than breaking down in the middle of nowhere. So, before you load the car and take off, make sure that your vehicle is in tip-top condition.

A pre-trip inspection as part of an overall maintenance program can give you peace of mind and help prevent costly repairs.

Inspect and repair, if needed, the following:

- Radiator and cooling system, including water pump, fan and thermostat
- Brakes, brake pads and brake linings
- Battery and cables
- Belts and hoses
- Engine oil and oil filter
- Wiper blades and washer fluid
- Tire pressure and overall tire condition (including the spare).
- Most importantly, don’t leave on a long trip with your car’s “Check Engine” light on.

The Check Engine light appears when your vehicle’s On-Board Diagnostics (OBD) computer detects a problem. According to several state Air Pollution Control Districts, the Check Engine light is designed to limit air pollution, as well as alert drivers to a condition that can waste fuel, shorten engine life and result in potentially expensive repairs.

If the light does come on, a quick check of your vehicle’s service manual can often identify the problem and a course of action.



When planning a road trip, a pre-trip inspection can give you peace of mind; it also helps prevent costly repairs.

Those who take their car to a mechanic often find that technicians use a diagnostic tool to scan their vehicle and access trouble codes at a cost of \$55 to \$100.

A new automotive tool, with a Web site, lets consumers run their own diagnosis, enabling them to verify the mechanic’s assessment.

Called CarMD, the tool provides a basic overview of probable problems with the car’s electronic and emissions-related systems. It incorporates the same basic technology as tools used by mechanics, but is said to cost less and can be operated by anyone. A green light indicates that all systems are “go,” a yellow light signals a possible problem and a red light means there is a current problem and service is required.

For more in-depth information, simply plug the tool into your personal computer and turn it on. It will connect to the company’s Web site and provide a comprehensive report on your vehicle’s health, including possible problems, estimated fixes and repair costs.

To learn more or to make an order, visit the Web site at www.CarMD.com.