

Car Care Corner

Maintaining Your Car's Finish

(NAPSA)—Your car's paint job does more than keep your vehicle looking good—it also serves as its first line of defense. Imagine the elements a cyclist's skin must brave while riding in the rain. Now add salt, searing heat and sub-zero temperatures—all while moving at 55 miles per hour—and you may begin to feel your car's "pain."

So how do manufacturers ensure their paint jobs will do the jobs? They subject paint samples to veritable torture tests: baths of corrosives, temperature fluctuations (ranging from 22 degrees below zero to 194 degrees Fahrenheit) and a barrage of pebble-like missiles to test chip resistance.

The tests are all designed to learn ways to make paint jobs better and easier to maintain. "In a few short weeks, we simulate several years of adverse environmental conditions that vehicles experience," says Joseph P. Gdowski, Global Technical Director for coatings at BASF, a leading chemical company that developed some of the most innovative coatings on the market. "That helps us to develop improvements quickly."

Gdowski credits such tests with having made many modern cars virtually "rust proof." However, finishes and paint jobs can still be scratched and the polymer film that makes up the clearcoat can be damaged by bird droppings, tree sap and acid rain, among other things. He offers these tips for keeping vehicle finishes looking like new:

- If "location, location, location" is the mantra of real estate, then "wash it, wash it, wash it" is



New painting and coating techniques have made many of today's cars virtually "rust-proof."

the mantra for keeping paint looking newer longer.

- Don't wipe a dirty or dusty car with a dry rag and don't wash the car with a stiff-bristle brush. Hand washing is best. Brushless car washes are good, too; however, even traditional car washes are preferable to not washing a car at all.

- After washing, wipe off all water spots with a soft cloth or chamois.

- Don't park under trees. That can help you avoid bird droppings and sap.

- Avoid driving on gravel roads if possible. Also, don't follow other vehicles too closely. It's a safety hazard *and* the vehicles could kick up small stones that chip your paint.

- Avoid scraping ice or snow from painted surfaces. Remove snow with a soft brush.

- Immediately wipe antifreeze, washer fluid or gasoline spills off your car's finish.

For more tips and information, visit www.basf.com/usa.