

Making Road Trips Safer, Easier and More Fun

(NAPSA)—Whether you're going on a family vacation or hitting the road with friends, driving trips can create wonderful memories—or they can turn into your own private version of a *National Lampoon* movie. The key to having a safe, easy and fun adventure is to be prepared.

“When you're going on a driving vacation, it's important to make sure your car or truck is in good running order,” notes Sue Elliott-Sink, director of content for enjoythedriver.com, the consumer Web site from the Specialty Equipment Market Association (SEMA). “You also can prepare for the unexpected—and save your sanity—by carrying a few custom auto accessories along for the ride.”

enjoythedriver.com offers several tips to help travelers prepare for the road ahead:

- Expect the kids to get restless. An on-board entertainment system that lets kids watch movies, TV or play video games goes a long way toward making trips easier for everyone—and wireless headphones ensure that Mom and Dad won't go insane after listening to *Barney* for the zillionth time.

- Expect to get bad directions. A built-in or handheld navigation system will save you time and gas—and reduce stress—on the road. Most systems also include a



directory of sites along your route, ranging from the nearest golf course or amusement park to the closest gas station, hotel or restaurant.

- Check your vehicle's vital signs. Make sure your fluids are clean and topped off, check your tires for wear and proper air pressure, and check your belts and hoses. Also make sure you've taken care of any scheduled maintenance, like a tune-up.

- Don't get stranded. A portable jump starter, a tire inflator and a spare key in your wallet will let you get back on the road without having to wait for assistance. It's also wise to carry a first aid kit and a cell phone to call for help in an emergency.

- Somebody's going to get hungry or thirsty. To avoid fast food stops, bring along a portable refrigerator. Some do double-duty as freezers, too, so you can stow popsicles and Push-Ups for the kids, along with healthy snacks.

- Don't let an accident ruin

your vacation. A backup warning system, wide-angle outside mirrors or a rear-mounted camera system make it easier to see what's behind you and in your blind spots.

- Spills happen. Don't get mad. Protect your interior beforehand with ketchup-proof seat covers and soda-containing floor liners. Trunk and cargo area liners provide protection from messy sporting gear, too.

- Don't cram. It's a given that you're going to have more stuff than space. But if you move some of your luggage, toys and other gear outside your vehicle—to a rooftop or hitch-mount basket, rack or enclosed carrier—you'll have more room for people to get comfortable inside.

- Stop juggling. Custom cupholders and a wide array of organizers let you focus on the road, instead of all the stuff that's moving around inside your vehicle. Backpack-style organizers and trays that hang from a headrest also will keep toys handy for the kids and give them a place to draw or play cards.

For more family and travel-related tips and accessories, visit www.enjoythedriver.com or write to SEMA Consumer Affairs, 1575 S. Valley Vista Dr., Diamond Bar, CA 91765.