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Proactive Car Care Pays Off Down the Road

New survey finds U.S. drivers are making sacrifices because of high gas prices

AUTOZONE (August 2011) – Gas prices and tough economic conditions are affecting Americans' driving and spending habits. According to a recent survey sponsored by AutoZone, more than half of U.S. drivers are making sacrifices in order to accommodate for higher gas prices.

Shorter trips and cutting back on dining out are just a couple of ways motorists say they are compensating for paying higher gas prices. Meanwhile, nearly half of survey respondents say that the economy has had an impact on their decision to purchase a new vehicle. This means more older vehicles are on the road and more vehicles in need of repair. According to the National Car Council, 80 percent of vehicles on the road are in need of service or parts.

While Americans are gripping their wallets, AutoZone reminds drivers of the importance of routine and proactive maintenance. A few dollars spent on car care can go a long way in increasing fuel economy and extending the life of the vehicle.

"Spending a few minutes and a few dollars performing routine maintenance checks can ease the pain at the pump and help extend vehicle life," said Steve Stoll, director, merchandising at AutoZone. "A small investment in car care today could pay off down the road."

Jody Devere, CEO of Ask Patty, an automotive advice website, recommends checking and maintaining critical vehicle components as the hot summer comes to an end.

"Many vehicle components can be weakened during continuous days of hot weather," Devere said. "Checking and replacing key vehicle components in early fall can uncover any damage that occurred during the hot, summer months."

AutoZone offers the following tips to ensure vehicles are running safely and efficiently:

Check Fluids.

Checking and maintaining the levels on key fluids can prevent engines from overheating. These fluids include engine oil, transmission fluids and antifreeze/coolant. Also, changing to a quality, synthetic engine oil such as Mobil 1 Advanced Fuel Economy can improve fuel efficiency and engine performance.

Test Battery to Prevent a Breakdown.

Many batteries that fail during fall and early winter had become weakened by the scorching summer heat. Although batteries last an average of three to five years, the National Car Care

Council recommends checking the battery at least annually, preferably during the early fall and spring, to avoid a breakdown during the hottest months of the year.

Replace and Maintain Vital Components.

Spark Plugs

Spark plugs can affect fuel efficiency, emissions and economy. As spark plugs wear, they do not burn fuel as cleanly, which is why it is important to change spark plugs at the proper interval. Motorists should purchase the correct type of spark plugs and replace them at the proper interval as recommended by the manufacturer. If the owner's manual has been lost, many websites, such as the National Car Care Council's website**,** www.carcare.org, offer a recommended maintenance schedule for vehicles.

Oxygen Sensors

Replacing oxygen sensors can improve gas mileage. Check and replace one- and two-wire sensors every 30,000-50,000 miles and every 60,000-100,000 miles for "heated" type oxygen sensors.

Air Filters

Replacing a clogged air filter can lead to increased performance and acceleration. Air filters should be checked at every oil change, and replaced every 12,000 miles.

Drivers seeking more information about getting their vehicles ready for the summer can visit www.autozone.com for car care tips and maintenance how-to videos.

For more information, or to interview an automotive expert from AutoZone, please contact Natashia Gregoire at 901-260-4116 or email ngregoire@archermalmo.com.

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