

Autumn Servicing



If your car breaks down, you only have yourself to blame

Regular servicing makes good economy

YOUR car is one of the most expensive purchases you are ever likely to make and keeping that chosen mode of transport in tip-top condition throughout the year is crucial.

Breaking down on a country lane on a snowy Sunday, for example, is something that is to be avoided at all costs.

But it's a sad fact of the modern age that today's sophisticated vehicles and machines are so far removed from what they were only a few years ago. This is because of the wholesale adoption of computerised technology.

Such advances have enabled manufacturers to give extended guarantees and lengthen servicing intervals in many cases to three years or more on runabouts.

There is obviously a temptation to leave recommended servicing even longer – but it is false economy.

All that technology means that no longer can essential maintenance be a Saturday morning job. So to make sure your four-wheeled pride and joy is working efficiently, economically and safely it is well worth entrusting the work to the experts.

Each time you climb into your car and step astride your motorcycle you are making an act of faith. You believe that the tyres will remain glued to the road, that the brakes will work instantly and perfectly and that all mechanical parts will work with precision and smoothness.

But unless everything has been cared for this

simply isn't going to happen. A car engine is a machine with parts working in unison – but that's all. It doesn't have the human capacity to recover itself.

There is an added problem in that cars of today are so sophisticated that DIY servicing is out of the question. This means you have to bite the bullet and entrust the well-being of your car to the experts.

Amateurs simply don't have the knowledge nor the tools required to do the job properly.

Inevitably, any car will deteriorate over the years and while the owner may compensate for shortcomings he or she knows, deep down, that performance is not what it should be. And a poorly-performing vehicle costs more in the

long run. Only a perfectly-tuned engine can turn in the fuel consumption figures ratified for a vehicle by the Government.

Regular check-ups ensure that the car is as safe as it can possibly be kept. Remember that many of the inspections that are made can provide an early warning of potential trouble in the future.

You owe it to yourself, your family and anyone you carry in your car along with all other road users to make sure your car is always in its best condition.

So, a final note of caution... if you break down on a dark winter's night in the snow miles from anywhere don't kick the car.

Kick yourself for not keeping up with your obligations to it.

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Driven to distraction

OVERCROWDED roads make car drivers late for work, school or appointments on average nearly five times in a typical term-time month, according to an online *Which* survey.

This is despite people already taking measures to dodge queues. Four out of five drivers plan their journeys to avoid congestion and a similar proportion leave earlier or later than they should to avoid jams. A quarter of drivers regularly avoid journeys completely rather than getting stuck in traffic.

It's clear that traffic congestion is driving people to distraction. *Which* asked

hundreds of people what they think the solution is and almost half of people surveyed want to see cheaper public transport and 13% want more to be done to encourage people to walk or cycle.

People were even supportive of some fairly drastic restrictions on car use with over two thirds of people favouring a ban of the school run. Parents taking their children to school accounts for about 20% of term time traffic congestion.

A quarter of people want a limit of one car per household; a third want to ban 4x4 cars at peak time, despite the fact that

they don't take up more road space than other cars. A quarter support the idea that people who drive with no passengers at peak times should pay a charge.

On some roads congestion is so endemic that the systems are not alerted. And sometimes there is no reasonable alternative route available.

Malcolm Coles, editor of *which.co.uk*, said: "It is clear there's no quick fix to the problems of traffic congestion. "People in our survey think better and cheaper public transport is the answer. Only a few think road charging is the solution."

Seat belts should be child's play



IT should be child's play for motorists to comply with a change in new seat belt laws.

But there has been some opposition from parents to more new child car restraint laws which come into effect this week, which will mean that parents will have to make sure that children under 4ft 5 inches in height use an appropriate child car seat, booster seat or booster cushion in cars and vans.

Ronan Hart, from Autonation said:

"It's all about saving lives and the fact that there are 2,000 child deaths or injuries a year in vehicle accidents."

His warning is: "The penalties for not using a seat belt or child restraint remain at a £30 fixed penalty but up to £500 if the case goes to court. As a driver, if you are convicted of failing to ensure that a child passenger is using an appropriate child restraint, or wearing a seat belt, you could also face a fine of up to £500."

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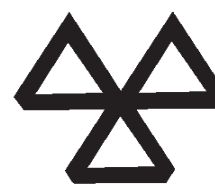
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Putting the wrong fuel into your tank can cost you dearly

TENS of thousands of drivers are being hit with major repair bills after putting the wrong fuel in their car, so take care when you are filling up.

That is the warning from the AA Trust who said that misfuelling affects an estimated 120,000 drivers each year. The average repair bill is £150, but can be as much as £3,000.

It is also caused by drivers mistakenly filling their diesel engine cars with petrol.

Now the AA Trust and petrol retailers are launching an information campaign to tackle the problem.

The boom in sales of diesel cars, which now accounts for one in four of new cars sold, means that opportunities for forecourt confusion will continue unless something is done to prevent it.

The AA Motoring Trust says that many households now have two cars, often using different fuels, and drivers who use both from time to time are particularly vulnerable to misfuelling. It is also a problem when people hire cars, and with drivers who use a differently-fuelled vehicle at work from their own.

The cost of the damage done when a car has been filled with the wrong fuel depends on whether it has been driven before the mistake is noticed.

If it has not been started, usually the tank simply needs to be drained, but if it has been driven major repairs may be needed, which can cost the unsuspecting driver up to 3,000.

Clean, modern fuel-efficient cars are very sensitive to the quality of what is in the tank, so even a small amount of the wrong fuel can have serious consequences.

And the problem doesn't end there, as the contaminated fuel that is drained from the car presents an environmental hazard.

Says the AA: "The fuel is to all intents and purposes useless, and has to be disposed of at special disposal centres, which just adds to the cost to the driver."

"We must try to reduce misfuelling by raising awareness of the problem among all drivers."

Drivers can find out more about the problems of misfuelling by logging onto the website:

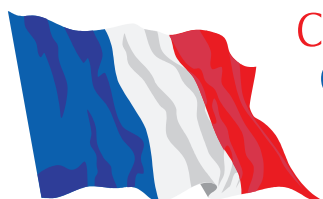
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