

# Care For Your Car In the Spring



Spring is here and none too soon. Traditionally, folks toss open the windows and get down to some serious housecleaning; and it should be no different for your automobile. Whether you do the work yourself or depend on a professional technician, getting your vehicle in shape now will undo the damage of winter driving and get you ready for the busy summer driving season. Here are some tips from the experts who certify automobile technicians -- the non-profit National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE).

- **Read the owner's manual and follow the recommended service schedules.** The manual contains a complete checklist of services and schedules and other important information about your vehicle.
- **Remove clutter; vacuum the carpeting; clean all windows; wipe down headlights with a soft, damp rag to prevent scratching.** Wash and wax your vehicle to remove winter salt and grime and to protect your vehicle's finish.
- **Flush and refill the cooling system (radiator) according to the service manual's instructions.** The level, condition, and concentration of the coolant should be checked periodically. If you are doing your own work, make sure the engine has cooled down before removing the radiator cap.
- **Have engine performance problems like hard starts, rough idling, and stalling corrected.** You'll get better gasoline mileage and you can catch minor problems before they grow into more expensive repairs later on.
- **If you are not a do-it-yourselfer, look for repair facilities with vehicles in the parking lot equal in value to your own.** Modern equipment in the service bays, and signs of qualified automotive technicians as evidenced by trade school diplomas, certificates of advanced course work and training classes, as well as national certification of the individual technicians by ASE.

A qualified auto technician should check the tightness and condition of belts, clamps, and hoses. Most do-it-yourselfers do not have the proper equipment. But you can look for signs of wear, cracking, or frayed belts. Have belts and hoses replaced according to the service manual's intervals or sooner if you notice wear and tear so as to prevent sudden breakdowns.

- **Have a marginally operating air conditioner system serviced by a qualified technician.** The air conditioners on older vehicles often contain ozone-depleting chemicals that could be released into the air through improper or incompetent service.
- **Change the oil and oil filter as specified in owner's manual.** (Properly dispose of used oil). Surveys of technicians indicate that this is the most neglected service, and one that can greatly reduce the life of your vehicle. Replace other filters (air, fuel, PCV, etc.) as recommended in the service manual.
- **Check the condition of tires, including the spare.** Let the tires "cool down" before checking their pressure. Uneven wear, 'cupping,' vibrations, or 'pulling' to one side indicates problems with your tires or suspension system.
- **Don't neglect your transmission.** Costly repairs can be prevented by routine service.
- **For safety and convenience, inspect all lights and bulbs; replace burned out bulbs.** Replace worn wiper blades and keep plenty of washer solvent on hand to fight summer's dust and insects.

The National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) was founded in 1972 as a non-profit, independent organization dedicated to improving the quality of automotive service and repair through the voluntary testing and certification of automotive technicians. ASE-certified technicians wear blue and white ASE shoulder insignia and carry credentials listing their exact area(s) of certification. Their employers often display the blue and white ASE sign. Businesses with a high percentage (75 percent or more) of certified service professionals can join the prestigious Blue Seal of Recognition Program.

*Courtesy of the ARA Content*

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