

# There are ways to make changing flat tires easier

Fump, fump, fump. It never fails. You're already late for work because you stole a few well-deserved extra winks. Fump, fump, fump. You've got a station wagon full of restless sixth graders and the day-long downpour that washed out their field trip is still going strong. Fump, fump, fump. There's no good time for a flat tire.

According to figures compiled by a leading tire manufacturer, an astounding total of more than 50 million Americans each year hear that aggravating sound. Although a flat tire is bound to put a kink in your day, champion racing crew chief Maurice Petty has some hints to help you prepare for a tire failure and to make your changing job easier, quicker and safer.

Tire changes are Maurice Petty's stock in trade. He's the younger brother of famed car racing champion Richard Petty whose 192 career victories and \$4 million in winnings have put the Petty family in an exclusive bracket, unapproached by the competition.

As crew chief for the STP/Petty Engineering team, Maurice is responsible for fast, safe pit stops. Tire changes are the cornerstone of almost every racing pit stop and a slow one can quickly change the story of a race. Nobody does them better than the Pettys.

In 1979, they became the first National Pit Crew Champions in NASCAR history by winning a season-long competition sponsored by the Craftsman Tool Division of Sears, Roebuck and Co.

"A special timing team clocks all pit stops of the 10 fastest qualifying cars," Petty explains. "The winner is the team whose finishing car spends the least total time in the pits."

### Safety's the key

"Even though we're straining to save every fraction of a second in the pits, safety is the essential element in any stop," emphasizes the bearded Maurice. "On pit road or beside the highway, cars come by fast,

blocks, medium flat-bladed screwdriver, lug wrench, jack and flashlight. A set of oversize coversalls isn't a bad idea either.

"The 'chock' blocks I carry are 12-inch pieces of 4 x 4 lumber. I use them to block the front and back of the tire that's diagonally across from the tire I'm changing. The screwdriver is for prying the hubcap loose. I also make it a point to check both the flashlight and the spare about once a month to see that they're ready to go.

### Shot of oil helps

"And about twice a year I squirt a quick shot of penetrating oil at the base of all the lug nuts. I learned that trick when I was a kid. One night my buddy had to drive 20 miles each way to rescue me when I didn't have the strength to bust loose a couple of rusted lug nuts. I remember he wasn't too happy.

"On the street, I put all the nuts in the hubcap. Sure beats crawling around looking for them later."

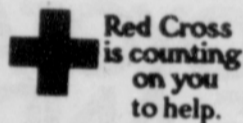
often close enough to feel like they're trying to suck the wallet out of your hip pocket, so safety must be the first consideration.

"As soon as you know you've got a problem, start looking for a safe place to park. One that's level, hard-surfaced and well off the highway. I've decided that it's better to risk ruining a tire rather than to stop immediately in a potentially dangerous spot.

"To help protect you from oncoming traffic, be sure you carry reflectors or, even better, flares for nighttime or rain."

So you've rolled to your unscheduled stop. How much time and energy you burn up will depend on just how well you are prepared. "It is impossible to do any job effectively and safely without the proper tools," continues Petty.

"In addition to reflectors or flares, your tire change equipment should include 'chock'



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