

# Thinking ahead can save breakdown on trip

by MARK STEWART  
of The Outlook staff

A pretrip check could save motorists a lot of heartache on this summer's vacation drive.

It's usually minor items which lead to breakdowns on long trips.

"Most of the breakdowns which do occur could have been taken care of with a little preventative maintenance," says Bill Dolby, manager of the Oregon Automobile Club's road service department.

Dolby says his crews have found that most breakdowns could have been prevented by pre-trip maintenance. "Things do happen which are completely unexpected (such as engine and transmission failures), but not often," he says.

The detail to which a vehicle should be

prepared depends on the length of the trip and the destination. "If you are traveling over 200 miles of nothing, you want to be prepared," Dolby says. Most people do a good job of preparing their vehicles for a long drives, he indicates.

Dolby says a pre-trip check should include:

- Giving the car a regular maintenance including a tune-up and an oil change;

- Checking all fluid levels including the battery, radiator and all power accessory units;

- Inspect the belts which drive the cooling fan and power accessories. Those which are cracked or excessively worn should be replaced;

- Inspect tires for cracks or nails. Also check the spare to make sure it has enough air;

- Check the head and tail lights and turn signals.

Drivers also should carry a number of items which could come in handy in case of a breakdown, Dolby says. This includes a basic tool kit of screwdrivers and wrenches, jumper cables, a container for water or gas, a syphon hose and flares or reflective devices to warn drivers of trouble ahead.

He also recommends carrying a tow rope and spare belts and hoses if possible. This could allow a passing motorist to provide a tow or a simple repair.

"The better prepared you are before the breakdown... the better able you'll be able to get out of it more easily," Dolby said.

If a breakdown does occur, there are some common sense things which a

motorist should do to increase his margin of safety, he said.

Most important is to get off the road as far as possible. If the roadway has a fog line on the shoulder, the car should be parked well inside it, Dolby says. "If a car is a hazard, the Oregon State Police will tow it."

Then place flares or reflective triangles at the front and rear of the car to warn passing drivers of the situation.

The next step depends on the type of breakdown. If possible stay out of the roadway, he says. However, this often is tough when changing a flat on the left side of the car on a narrow road. If possible, use a passenger to warn of oncoming traffic.

The best rule of thumb to use during breakdowns is to use common sense, Dolby says.

## Caring for tires can be very simple

by MARK STEWART  
of The Outlook staff

Taking care of tires doesn't require a lot of time or work, but it will increase tire wear, safety, ride comfort and fuel economy.

Basic tire care consists of maintaining proper pressure and rotating them every 5,000 miles, says Mark Musico of the Gresham Les Schwab Tire Center, 390 E. Burnside Road.

Air pressure in tires should be checked once a month, he says. The amount of pressure depends on recommendations for individual vehicles. It should be checked when the tires are cold.

Keeping tires properly inflated will increase a motorist's margin of safety while driving. Consumer Reports magazine says an underinflated tire will impair normal braking and traction; increase the chance of overheating or tire blowout especially at heavy loads or high speeds; and cause awkward or dangerous handling. It also will reduce fuel economy.

An overinflated tire also provides a rougher ride, the magazine says. In addition, a tire with too much air will lack the "give" tires need to help avoid damage from road hazards.

Maintaining proper pressure in tires also will help them last longer, says Randy Roberts of Master Tire Center, 995 NE Division St. An underinflated tire will wear more rapidly at the edges while an overinflated tire will wear more quickly in the center.

Rotating tires also is important because it will allow a set to wear evenly, he says. Radials must be rotated from front to rear on the

same side. If they are moved to the opposite side of the vehicle, their internal belts could slip which would ruin the tire.

However, bias-ply tires can be moved across the car. The usual method to rotate this type of tire is to move the front tires to the rear on the same side and the rear tires to the opposite front side.

Most new cars are engineered for radials,

which provide better handling, increased fuel economy and longer life than bias-ply tires. However, they are more expensive than bias-ply tires.

Radials handle better because of their design — body plies run from sidewall to sidewall and perpendicular to the roadway. This allows the sidewalls to flex and the tread to maintain contact with the road.

Rolling resistance also is

reduced, which leads to better fuel economy, and belts — usually steel cord — circle the plies to provide longevity, about 40,000 miles for the average tire.

Bias-ply tires have plies and sidewalls which are stiffer, which affects handling. They also don't roll as easily as radials and usually do not have steel belts to protect them so they do not last as long, usually about 25,000 miles.

## Keep spare fuses around

To most car owners, fuses are like volcanoes. They don't think about them until they blow. Then, certain accessories in the car stop working—possibly windshield wipers, lights, radio or whatever is on that circuit. Caught without a spare, you could be in trouble.

Protecting the car's electrical

system, fuses open and shut off current when overloads occur that could damage wiring or other components. To get a circuit back in business after a fuse blows, the fuse has to be replaced. If it blows again, find out why and correct the problem.

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