

# Transportation

## Keep summer road trips safe

**W**hen the outdoors beckons, road trips can be the perfect way to see the countryside, escape the routine of daily life and enjoy short vacations.

When taking to the open road, it is important to focus on safety. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration says that planning and prevention can spare road-trippers from the consequences of breakdowns, traffic accidents or other road emergencies.

### Stock emergency preparedness items

Prior to a trip, drivers should make sure their vehicles are equipped with necessary safety items.

Liberty Mutual Insurance New Beginnings Report warns that nearly half of Americans do not check that proper emergency items are stored in their vehicles prior to getting on the road. Before embarking on a road trip, make sure vehicles have a first aid kit, flashlight, water bottles, phone chargers, tire-repair tools, flares, jumper cables, towels and even an old backpack for storage.

### Schedule a service call

Regular maintenance can keep vehicles from breaking down. Drivers should take their cars in for tuneups before long road trips. Such tuneups should include an oil change, battery check, tire rotation and any other necessary servicing.



### Plan your route

Map out the route before heading out. Be aware of potential road closures, obstacles or construction. Thanks to real-time GPS updates through mobile phones and other devices, some drivers like to rely on tech to get them through. But it's important to realize service may be spotty in rural areas. Mapping a trip out in advance can save drivers from getting lost during mobile service interruptions.

### Join a roadside repair service

Breakdowns happen even if trips are carefully planned. Automotive clubs can help drivers when breakdowns occur. Some car manufacturers also include roadside assistance in warranty packages, so inquire

about your coverage.

### Refresh defensive driving skills

A safe-driving course can remind drivers of the rules of the road. In some cases, courses also may qualify drivers for discounts on their auto insurance policies. One such class is the AARP Driver Safety course.

### Avoid distractions

Keep children and other passengers occupied so they are not a distraction to the driver. Set out with favorite music, books, video games or even a pad and paper for doodling. Pack snacks to keep everyone feeling full in between roadside pit stops. Drivers also can load their cars up with tissues, water and music to limit distractions.

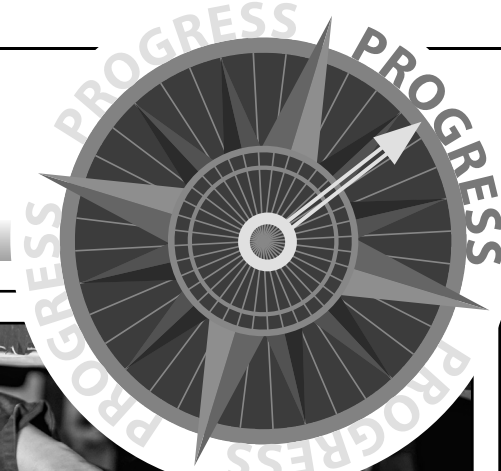
### Plan fun breaks along the way

Breaks give drivers a reason to rest and passengers an opportunity to get out and stretch their legs. The Roadside America smartphone app lists must-see stops along any route, and drivers can plan their own stops as well.

### Stay over if necessary.

According to the NHTSA, driving while drowsy is a contributing factor in 100,000 accidents every year. Drive only when well-rested. Share driving duties or plan a night at a motel so everyone is well-rested.

Road trips are all about fun, but drivers must emphasize safety before and during such excursions.



It's easy to underestimate the level of know-how required to be an automotive mechanic, and just how essential the job is. There are an estimated 30,000 parts on the average car, and data from the International Organization of Motor Vehicle Manufacturers indicates around 74,705,000 cars were produced in 2018.

Auto mechanics are in high demand. Although many high schools offer adequate training to prepare individuals for a job in automotive mechanics, most mechanics are now expected to have completed an associate degree or certificate program in automotive training to keep up with ever-evolving vehicle technology.

Students can enroll in a vocational education program, receive a certificate and then go on to employee training. Upon completion of that training, students can become master mechanics. Training and schooling typically takes two years.

Salary.com reports that the average automotive mechanic salary in the United States was \$38,551 as of December 2018.

## Recognize potential brake problems

Maintaining a vehicle is more than just a way to protect one's financial investment. Vehicle maintenance can protect against accidents and make the road safer for drivers, their passengers and their fellow motorists.

Fully functioning brakes are an important component of automotive safety. Brake-related problems accounted for 22 percent of crashes where vehicular failure was cited as the cause of the collision. Bad brakes are particularly notorious for rear-end collisions. Faulty, worn brake lines, antilock brake system malfunctions and worn brake pads and discs are some potential brake problems.

It is important that motorists learn to recognize the first symptoms of brake trouble so they can address issues before they put drivers, their passengers and other motorists at risk of accident or injury.

- Unusual noises: Screeching, grinding, rubbing and high-pitched sounds are common indicators that brake pads, rotors and other parts of the braking system need attention. Worn pads can cause damage to other vehicle parts, resulting in more expensive repairs.

- Pulling: If the car pulls to one side when applying the brakes, this may indicate brake pad linings are wearing down unevenly. A brake adjustment may be necessary. Pulling also may be indicative of an object or debris caught in the brake fluid.

- Less responsive: If the brakes just do not seem to be as effective as they once were, or it is necessary to press the pedal harder for the brakes to engage, there may be a brake fluid leak or an air leak. Check under the vehicle to see if any fluids are pooling.

- Pungent odors: A burning smell may be indicative of worn out brake pads and friction on the tires. Each of these issues require immediate attention.

- Vibrations: Certain vibrations may indicate brake issues. Rotors can become warped from metal-on-metal rubbing, potentially leading to a failure of the vehicle to brake properly. They also may indicate tires are misaligned.

These problems can be properly assessed by a trained mechanic.

## Safeguard your vehicle from the elements

In a perfect world, all vehicle owners would be able to park their cars and trucks in garages. In such a world, automobiles would not be vulnerable to sun, storms and other natural elements that, over time, can contribute to wear and tear.

But many drivers cannot or choose not to park their cars in garages. Some are content to let their vehicles brave the elements, while others look for ways to protect their cars and trucks as much as possible. Drivers who count themselves among the latter group can take these simple steps to protect their cars and trucks from whatever Mother Nature has in store for them.

- Park in the shade. Parking in the shade can protect both the interior and exterior of a vehicle. Shaded areas protect upholstery and dashboards inside the car from sun-induced fading, while also limiting the damage sun can cause to exterior paint. Faded paint may hurt the resale value of a vehicle, prompting prospective buyers to walk away or at least wonder if a vehicle with a faded exterior was well maintained.

- Wash and wax. Washing and waxing a vehicle helps to minimize damage that's inevitable regardless of where drivers park their cars. Dirt and debris litter roadways, and over time cars can collect a large amount of these unwanted stowaways. If dirt and debris are not removed, they can cause long-term damage to vehicle exteriors. Washing and waxing a car can ensure its exterior looks good and reduce the likelihood of rust and other corrosion from occurring.

- Don't write off bird droppings. Some drivers, especially those who do not park their cars and trucks in garages, may write off bird droppings as an annoying yet harmless side effect of vehicle ownership. However, bird droppings are acidic and, if left to their unsightly devices, can cause permanent damage to vehicle paint. Tree sap is an equally formidable foe, potentially causing

ing scratching because it can be very difficult to remove without spreading. Specially formulated sprays can help drivers remove bird droppings and sap from their vehicles.

- Employ a car cover. Drivers who have garages but use them to store things other than their vehicles can use car covers when parking their cars in their driveways. Covers protect cars from the elements and can be quickly and easily removed.

Nature can be harsh on vehicles. Protecting automobiles from the elements should be a priority for drivers, especially those who do not park their cars and trucks in garages.

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