

Mechanics Pinpoint

Some Important Aspects On Keeping A Car Running Smoothly

By Teresa Burns
Post Staff Writer

Most of us realize the categories women fall into when it comes to their cars. Some drive their cars until it can't be driven any more - i.e., the cars are totally dead. Then there are those who take their ailing cars to the mechanic - always in the back of a tow truck.

Of course, there are women who have their cars regularly checked by a trained mechanic. And there are those who try, and some who succeed, at fixing or at least checking their own cars.

Three mechanics in the Charlotte area have contributed what they feel to be the most important aspects of keeping a car running smoothly. How would you fair in the checklist department? Do you ever -

- + check the oil,
- + check the water in radiator (when the car is cold),
- + check air in tires (air pressure should be 30 lbs.),
- + check oil and air filter,
- + check transmission fluid,
- + check brake fluid?

The mechanics agree that these are the basic maneuvers for securing a well-running car (that is if nothing serious occurs). John Drakeford, owner of Drake's Auto Curb Service, 3000 Barringer Dr. suggests that if you do decide to check your own car, check the oil at least once a week. "Everyday wouldn't hurt especially if your car is using oil - i.e., if the oil is getting out of the system by leaking or burning. If there is no oil in the car the engine will lock up because of friction. Oil acts as a shield between two metals." So make sure when you check the oil - check it right.

Drakeford also suggests that you check the radiator water, battery water and



Joyce Phifer isn't afraid to get her hands dirty when it comes to checking her auto. As a result she is above average mobile for ailments.

the air in the tires at least once a month. A woman could probably learn these checks in about 10 minutes, according to Drakeford. To change a tire it may take 5-10 minutes and to change the oil it would take maybe 15 minutes.

Any tasks that takes only a few minutes to learn must be rather simple. But don't tell that to Willie Elder, co-owner of Davis and Elder Texaco Service Station at 2317 Statesville Ave. "I wouldn't suggest to a woman to change the oil unless she took some kind of training," Elder suggested. "You just don't get under an auto-you have to jack it up," Elder said. "It would probably take a woman an entire hour to complete changing a tire," Elder contended. "They would have to jack up the car and the bolts are sometimes tight for a woman," he continued.

George Wyman, co-owner of Hunter and Wyman Auto Repair Services, Inc., 1627 Freedom Dr., also said that changing the oil may be harder than

it looks. "It would be hard to change the oil," Wyman began, "you have to crawl on the ground and get your hands dirty. It's hard to do anyway - it's hard for a man to crawl." Wyman also said that even checking your car correctly can have negative repercussions. "When checking the water in the radiator, check it when the car is cold. And you have to put the cap back on correctly or the car may run hot."

In essence what the three mechanics are saying is that if you decide to check or change something on your car, make sure you know what you are doing. Sometimes you don't have to take a class to learn how to check or change things on your car. Joyce Phifer who owns a sky blue 1978 Firebird says she knows how to change a tire out of necessity. "I've had to change a lot of tires," she smiled. She changed one tire in about 20 minutes one dark and rainy night. She checks the pressure in her tires, checks the antifreeze, the oil, the transmission fluid, and air fil-

ter. "After that I'm lost," Ms. Phifer admits. She remarks she isn't in the car checking business for fun - "there just aren't any men out here," she says - so instead she saves money and does it herself. But if you are like about 80 percent of the women who don't know the brake fluid from the windshield wiper fluid, or one of those who dislikes greasy hands (even if you could use Platex living gloves while changing the oil), or you just don't like the thought of breaking your fingernails, join the crowd and rattle on down to your friendly neighborhood mechanic.

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