

Save Money On Auto Repairs & Keep Your Car Longer

Higher gas prices are probably turning your wallet into one gigantic black hole. Filling up your tank today means you have to get by on less money to pay for everything else. Emergency repairs due to unexpected breakdowns are even worse. You lose pay for time off from work and end up with huge repair bills.

With Emergency repairs you can't shop around for the best deal and the work usually ends up being done at the shop you were towed to. Most towing plans only pay for the first 5 or 10 miles and the charges really add up for every mile after that.

Emergency repairs cost much more than pre-emptively replacing old parts on a scheduled basis before their expected failure point. A day lost from work can cost you hundreds of dollars more. Extended warranty and service plans have many exclusions and loop holes and often end up costing you even more.

Here's a better way to keep your vehicle running well for over 100,000 miles and avoid high cost emergency repairs.

Have your oil changed every 5000 miles and check the level each week to be sure it isn't going down.

Change or refresh a few quarts of automatic transmission fluid every 15,000 miles. Siphon it through the transmission fluid dip stick tube with an oil extractor. None of the seals or fittings will be disturbed and there's little chance of possible leakage from improperly resealing the transmission. Using an oil extractor to refresh transmission fluid costs less and results in fewer mistakes.

Replacing your belts, belt tensioner, spark plugs, battery and alternator before they actually break down avoids costly towing charges, lost time from work and high cost emergency repairs. Usually, these

parts start to wear down within the first 50,000 miles that you own your new car. Waiting until they break down completely could be costly.

You should replace your spark plugs and air filter at about 30,000 miles, even though your vehicle manual says they may be good for a longer period of time. It's a lot cheaper than paying for tows and emergency repairs if they should malfunction. Doing this on a scheduled basis will probably improve your fuel economy and save you money on gas. It's also a good idea to have your fuel system and engine cleaned at the same time.

At about 50,000 miles you should get new fan belts, serpentine belt, belt tensioner, battery and alternator. Shop around for the best deal before you do the work.

Amazingly, doing all of these items in one service job could save you up to \$500, plus 10 to 20 hours of time and potential towing expense when compared to waiting until each part fails before you get it repaired.

You don't have to do it all at once. Do the battery first, then about 5,000 or 10,000 miles later, replace the belts, tensioner and alternator in one visit. Get all of your used parts back, except for the battery. Save the used belts and used alternator in a tote bin in your trunk. This way, if you ever have a breakdown, you have the parts with you. They're usable, even if they're worn, and that can get you out of a jam, especially if you're traveling out of town.

Most of the time you can have the bearings and the voltage regulator replaced on the alternator and it will be just like new.

At about 60,000 miles replace the air filter, spark plugs and spark plug wires, and then the air filter and spark plugs again at 90,000 miles.

Then at about 100,000 miles repeat the battery, belts, belt tensioner and alternator replacement process.

Replacing those spark plugs pre-emptively could prevent your catalytic converter from failing prematurely. If you have just one spark plug that is mis-firing, a lot of unburned fuel goes into your exhaust system and has to be burned up by your catalytic converter. This could cause the catalytic converter to become clogged and result in a large repair bill. On top of that your fuel economy goes down until you get the problem resolved.

Keeping continuous track of your fuel economy is very important.

If your driving patterns and trips are consistent you should be able to record and maintain your average fuel economy (MPG) on a consistent basis. Any prolonged drop in fuel economy of 10% or more (for more than a few weeks) could mean there's a problem with your engine.

Replacing Your Car Battery Before It Fails Could Save You A Lot Of Money

Most car batteries need to be replaced after about 5 years or 50,000 miles. You could push it another year or two, but that could be costly.

When a battery gets older, it loses the ability to be charged and hold the charge. The alternator has to work harder to maintain the charge. This means more strain on the alternator, the belts and bearings. At first the effect is gradual but accelerates rapidly. You could be losing fuel economy and causing wear to other parts for many months or even years before the battery completely fails. Talk to a battery specialist about the best way to service your battery.