

Listen Up, Drivers!

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

If Your Motor Oil Could Talk

OK, we had an arrangement. You'd change me every 3,000 miles or three months and in exchange, I'd keep critical parts of your precious vehicle's engine lubricated, cleaned and cooled. Here I am, however, dirty and old and still expected to perform. No way.

The Car Care Council reminds motorists that although oil can't speak for itself, it is the engine's life-blood and that changing the oil regularly is still the single most important thing to do to ensure the engine's long life.

What happens when oil ages and why does it need to be changed? With time, oil becomes contaminated by sources including dust, metallic shavings, condensation and even antifreeze. The additives in the oil that protect the engine break down, lose their effectiveness and can act as contaminants or corrosives.

When contaminants are present, they can stick to parts of the engine and act as abrasives, causing it to perform less efficiently. The oil lubricates poorly and is much less effective at cushioning the moving parts of the engine, which can increase friction. Ultimately, an engine that is not properly lubricated will wear prematurely and could seize up due to the friction and heat. Regular oil and filter changes can eliminate the contaminants and limit the effects they have on the engine.

"It's one of those things that's easy to put off doing. It's like putting off teeth cleaning. Cavities will happen," said Rich White, executive director, Car Care Council. "The oil change improves efficiency, fuel economy and dependability, and protects the engine."

Automotive technicians agree. In a Vavoline study of ASE-certified technicians in 2006, 84 percent of technicians surveyed said that not getting a regular oil change could cause the most problems for a vehicle, when compared to other maintenance issues.

The council recommends that drivers follow the owner's manual for viscosity and grade of motor oil. Viscosity refers to the thickness or thinness of the oil. The viscosity of oil changes with temperatures. Oil thins when heated and thickens when cooled; therefore, having the proper viscosity grade for the climate and temperatures of your geographic location is very important. Oil that does not flow well in cold temperatures will leave parts of the engine with no protection, while oil that burns off and becomes too fluid in high temperatures will also leave parts of the engine unprotected.

As a reminder, if you change your own oil, dispose of it properly. Never pour used oil down the drain or into the ground. Instead, take the used oil to a facility that accepts used engine oil.

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