

Clunker care

In a tough economy, car owners learn preventive maintenance

Car check

Taking good care of your car could mean lower costs in the long run

Change:

- oil**
every 3,000 miles
- fuel filter**
every 30,000 miles
- transmission fluid**
every 30,000 miles
- power steering fluid**
every 30,000 miles



Krista Goodman/Index

Jay Findling, service manager at Lovegreen Ford-Chrysler, checks the oil during a routine maintenance visit. Car owners should have the oil in their vehicles changed every 3,000 miles to ward off unnecessary repairs.

BY DANA BRUXVOORT
Staff Reporter

The economic crisis has left people trying even harder to make their vehicles last longer.

An increase in car maintenance is one of the recent byproducts of the economic downturn, as people are avoiding spending money on new vehicles or costly repair work.

"[Customers are] convinced that they're going to get more trouble-free miles out of their vehicle if they maintain it properly," said Bill Lovegreen, general manager of Lovegreen Ford-Chrysler.

Lovegreen said he sees a learning curve coming for people who want to extend the life of their cars.

"When people keep their vehicles longer, they learn about maintenance issues that they wouldn't

necessarily address," he said.

Lovegreen said his business has tried to adjust to its customers' changing needs. He said they are educating their customers on what they can do to add to the longevity of their vehicles.

Although his service business has increased, Lovegreen said he has seen a decrease in new car sales. He said the market for used vehicles still is fairly steady.

"Without question [new car sales] will rebound," he said. "The question is how long it will take."

Lovegreen said he is trying to be future-minded and innovative in his approach to business during the economic crisis.

"We're stable, we're going forward, and we have a plan," he said. "And I think that's what's important in small business today."

Joe Conway, manager of Cus-

tom Complete Automotive, said his business also has remained stable during the economic downturn. He said he has seen a slight increase in maintenance work but that this increase will become more apparent in six months to a year.

"Overall, talking to customers, I think ... most of them [are] keeping their cars and maintaining them more so than going out and buying new ones," Conway said. "They're probably doing more preventative maintenance than they did before."

Conway said he also has seen some customers putting off major car repairs.

"If they can put something off as far as a major dollar, then they're going to," he said.

Conway said he teaches his customers what they can do to avoid costly repairs and keep their vehicles running longer and better.

"To me, if you educate your customer in this industry, that's how they know to take care of their car," he said. "So that's something I've always done."

He recommends preventive maintenance such as regularly changing fuel filters and checking oil, power steering and transmission fluids. Oil should be changed every 3,000 miles and transmission and power steering fluids every 30,000 miles. Fuel filters also should be replaced every 30,000 miles.

Conway said he sees many Truman students come in for service on their vehicles. He said one reason is that auto work costs significantly less in a small town than it would in a larger city.

"You're getting the same thing for a lesser dollar and getting just as good of service, if not better," he said.

Charles Wheeler, service manager at Jim Robertson's Chevrolet, said he also has seen customers being more diligent about car maintenance. He said the economic downturn has caused business flow to fluctuate.

"I see changes from month to month," he said. "It's just kind of an up and down cycle right now. I expect it to be up and down through 2009."

Senior Tony Walsh had recent car trouble and had his car towed and examined at a repair shop in Kirksville. Although repairs weren't necessary, he said he wasn't worried about cost because his insurance would cover it.

Walsh said he changes the oil in his car himself, and he also checks his own fluid levels. Doing maintenance on the car himself saves him money, he said.

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and fuel products in addition to the fuel products that Westport operates primarily as a major store. It would affect up business greatly," said David Halden, owner of Westport Package Store. "It would hurt us if they shut us down for the four days. It would hurt the employees and having any work for a few days. Westport employees are trained to ask for identification when selling liquor. Halden said, but outsiders still happen. If my employees make a mistake, they make a mistake," Halden said. "In that case, we had one elderly gentleman who had years of experience. The guy checked the ID — he put on his glasses and looked at it. He did what he was supposed to do. He just missed that particular ID. Halden said that since the accident, the quality employee has left Westport. In the six years since I've been here we've only had it happen a few times when the liquor commission sets up these things. Halden said, "The individual [the complexity of selling to minors, they don't want to sell to minors. That's not what we're here for. Although a supervised liquor license might damage a vendor's business, some can be not covered by a potential change. To be sure, there are other places I can buy," said senior Tom Jones. "It was a minor trying to buy all the time. It might matter, though. Both Havers 20 Convenience Store and Pick N' Save Convenience Store declared to commit and fuel products in addition to the fuel products that Westport operates primarily as a major store. It would affect up business greatly," said David Halden, owner of Westport Package Store. "It would hurt us if they shut us down for the four days. It would hurt the employees and having any work for a few days. Westport employees are trained to ask for identification when selling liquor. Halden said, but outsiders still happen. If my employees make a mistake, they make a mistake," Halden said. "In that case, we had one elderly gentleman who had years of experience. The guy checked the ID — he put on his glasses and looked at it. He did what he was supposed to do. He just missed that particular ID. Halden said that since the accident, the quality employee has left Westport. In the six years since I've been here we've only had it happen a few times when the liquor commission sets up these things. Halden said, "The individual [the complexity of selling to minors, they don't want to sell to minors. That's not what we're here for. Although a supervised liquor license might damage a vendor's business, some can be not covered by a potential change. To be sure, there are other places I can buy," said senior Tom Jones. "It was a minor trying to buy all the time. It might matter, though. Both Havers 20 Convenience Store and Pick N' Save Convenience Store declared to commit

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