



Spring is in the Air!

After your vehicle has faced brutal winter weather, it will need some proper maintenance to be ready for warm spring weather. Here are some important steps to take before heading out on the road.

- ✓ **Start with the exterior of the car.** Wash your car to remove all traces of salt from the bodywork, which will cause damage and corrosion if not properly removed.
- ✓ **Inspect windows and wiper blades.** Clear windows of de-icer and grime. Ensure that windshield wiper blades are not worn and replace them if needed. Clean washer jets to remove dirt and/or unblock them.
- ✓ **Check tire pressure.** Tires expand when hot so check them first thing in the morning. Using a digital tire pressure gauge is best for an accurate reading. All tires should be properly inflated, including the spare, to increase gas mileage, lengthen tire life and decrease the likelihood of a blowout.

Don't forget your oil. Adequate lubrication is one of the key factors to keeping your engine running smoothly. Temperature seriously affects your oil and its lubricating effectiveness, so consider changing the grade of your engine oil in hot temperatures. Check your owner's manual for the oil viscosity grade recommended for your vehicle.

- ✓ **Breathe easier with a clean air filter.** Remember to replace your vehicle's cabin air filter annually or more often in areas with heavy contaminants. During the warm months, contaminants such as pollen, dust, mold spores and smog can enter a vehicle through the air conditioning and ventilation systems.
- ✓ **Avoid overheating.** Overheating, especially as the weather gets warmer, is the leading cause of preventable breakdowns and one of the main areas where prevention is much cheaper than the cure. If your antifreeze is more than a few years old, play it safe and flush and fill your cooling system.
- ✓ **Add a coolant.** An inexpensive and easy insurance against engine heat is to add a coolant to your radiator. It's been shown to reduce engine temperature as much as 30 degrees or more. It also helps condition seals to prevent leaks. If you notice the coolant is not at the proper fill level, it is possible that there is a leak in the system and it should be checked out by a certified technician right away. *Warning: make sure you wait until your vehicle has cooled down before opening the bottle overflow cap to avoid serious injury.*
- ✓ **Check your belts and hoses.** A worn or loose belt can cause the engine to overheat. A cracked belt or a hose that is unusually soft or overly hard needs replacing. Make sure hose clamps are tight, and have the ends checked for cracks or corrosion. Because extreme heat can cause leaks and other damage, keep an eye out for hard, blistered or spongy hoses. If any of these warning signs are present, have the hoses replaced immediately.