

Springtime is the right time to give car checkup

By Jason Soifer, The Daily Courier



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PRESCOTT VALLEY - Every car that Al Beseler touches gets a thorough inspection.

No matter what the repair is, Beseler has a checklist that covers nearly every inch of the cars he works on as co-owner and master mechanic at Ultimate Automotive Repair.

April is National Car Care Month and Beseler says car owners can take simple steps to check their car's health.

"Your senses are the best tools you can ever have," he said.

He recommends people use their hands to check hoses, and eyes to spot cracks on the sides of tires and wiper blades.

"These are all things that you can do yourself to protect yourself to the best of your abilities," he said.

Beseler said people can check fluid levels and use a meat thermometer to make sure the air conditioning is producing cold air between 38 degrees to 45 degrees Fahrenheit.

All it takes is cranking up the air conditioning to full blast and making sure the recirculation button is on.

Put the thermometer in a vent and let it go for about five minutes.

"It measures temperatures no different than anything else," he said.

AAA Arizona Public Affairs Manager Linda Gorman said motorists should get their cars inspected before temperatures rise.

"Summer is really, really bad on our cars," she said. "It's bad on batteries and tires. It can cause a lot of unnecessary maintenance problems if you're not prepared."

Gorman said more than 124,000 club members got roadside assistance from May through August 2007 and she estimates that 60 percent of those calls were preventable if owners did some pre-maintenance or checks before hitting the road.

Overinflated tires can increase the chances that they crack or blowout and under inflated tires can reduce a car's fuel mileage 2 percent to 10 percent, Gorman said.

Beseler said a checkup is important because the rubber parts of a car's engine get hard and stiff in cold weather and warmer temperatures can lead to cracking belts, tires and hoses.

"We see a lot of that," he said. "It doesn't matter if they are a year or two old."

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The Daily Courier/Les Stukenberg

Al Beseler, owner of Ultimate Automotive Repair, looks at the underside of a vehicle after changing the oil while doing preventative maintenance on the vehicle.

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