

fall CAR CARE

Reach top mileage on your car with it still going strong



Many drivers may find the idea of keeping a vehicle that has surpassed the 100,000-mile mark preposterous. However, perhaps due to the rising cost of new vehicles, many drivers now recognize the benefits of keeping their vehicles for the long haul.

According to Polk research, many of today's drivers are keeping their cars for longer periods of time, with the average age of all cars on the road being 11 years.

In October of 2011, Joe LoCicero saw his 1990 Honda Accord crack the one million mile mark, a feat for which Honda awarded him a new Accord and a parade in his hometown. There are many benefits to keeping a car longer, including the financial impact of such a decision. In a recent survey and study from Consumer Reports, the savings of keeping a vehicle for 225,000 miles over 15 years versus purchasing and financing an identical model every five years equated to a sav-

ings of more than the original purchase price of the car. A person can potentially save \$20,000 or more on a properly maintained older car.

Keeping a car running beyond 200,000 miles was once pure luck. Cars made 10 to 20 years ago might not have been up to the task. But improvements in rust prevention, lubricants and engine technology have made it easier for today's vehicles to last longer. But as durable and reliable as today's cars may be, AAA notes the importance of regular maintenance.

Knowing your car is one of the first ways to make sure it gets the service it needs. Over time, many drivers start to identify warning signs, such as abnormal noises or if the vehicle simply feels off when out on the road. Finding a mechanic that can be trusted is an important step for drivers who want to keep their vehicles going strong for years to come. A driver is more likely to bring the car in for serv-

ice if the price is right and he or she does not feel like any costly and unnecessary repairs are being recommended. Building a good relationship with a mechanic can keep a car working longer. Newer model year cars can be taken to dealership mechanics, who may have a better working knowledge of newer electronics and the subtleties of specific models of cars. The owner's manual should not be something that simply takes up space inside the glove compartment. It is worthy of a read.

Understanding the recommended maintenance schedule and what other steps can be taken to prolong the life of the car can keep it on the road longer. Keeping the tires inflated to the proper pressure and using the right type of gasoline are the types of information that can be found in the manual. Drivers can save a lot of money on unnecessary repairs if they follow these guidelines.

Many people are keeping their vehicles longer, reaching mile marks that were once unheard of. Investing in a car that has a good track record of longevity and then properly maintaining the vehicle are necessary to getting the most out of your vehicle investment.

■ Metro Creative Connection

Is there a link between car color and accidents?

The color drivers choose for their car may say something about driver personalities and preferences. It also may play a role in the propensity to get into an accident.

Various studies have been conducted to determine if a certain car color puts a driver at a greater risk for a crash. Though it's difficult to pinpoint which color vehicles are most likely to be in accidents, common sense suggests that certain colors that are more conspicuous on the road are more easily seen, and this may make them less prone to accidents.

Daimler Benz once conducted a study on the conspicuousness of cars. White cars were the most inconspicuous, followed by black, dark red and blue. Dark-colored vehicles tend to be the most difficult to see on the road and therefore might be most prone to accidents.

Another study from researchers at the University of Auckland in New Zealand in 2003 showed that drivers of brown cars had a higher risk of injuries in car accidents.

Black and green cars also were involved in a high number of car accidents resulting in injuries. In addition, findings also indicated that people who drove silver cars had a 50 percent less chance of

being involved in accidents resulting in injury.

The reason why certain color vehicles are involved in more accidents was missing from the studies. Visibility may play a role, which would make lighter color vehicles less prone to accidents.

Another point to consider is that certain colors may be favored by individuals who have specific driving tendencies. For example, silver and gray cars are often seen as conservative and may be driven by an older demographic that is more cautious on the road. Black cars are often viewed as sleek and may be favored by those who like to push the envelope regarding speed.

While vehicle color may play a role in accidents, other factors also come into play, such as usage of lights and other features. The National Safety Council has stated the safest car color to be "one that is highly visible in the widest range of lighting, weather, and vision conditions."

They also indicated that white is most visible in uniform lighting but can be an unsafe color in bright sunlight, snow and fog.

Furthermore, safety behind the wheel has a lot to do with driver ability.

Defensive driving and being observant on the

roadways can significantly reduce accident risk. Here are some other ways to reduce accidents.

* Do not tailgate. Leave an adequate cushion between your car and the one in front of you to allow for braking or maneuvering around an obstacle.

* Use daytime running lights when available to make your car even more visible in all weather conditions.

* Leave for trips early enough so that you're not rushing and being aggressive on the roadway.

* Drive with weather conditions in mind, slowing down when necessary.

* Avoid distractions in the car. Taking your eyes off the road for mere seconds can result in lost opportunities for accident avoidance.

* Always wear seatbelts, even for short trips.

* Make sure you keep your car well maintained so that breakdowns do not contribute to accidents on busy highways.

While car color may play a role in accident rates, there is no definitive answer as to why certain cars are more prone to accidents than others.

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Read & Recycle!

Different tire types make a difference

Drivers rarely think of the tires on their vehicles until they have a flat. But the type of tires on your vehicle can impact its performance. When choosing tires for their vehicles, drivers should consider a host of factors, including the terrain and driving conditions vehicles are likely to encounter.

Understanding tires and what makes some a better fit than others for certain vehicles can make for safe driving and improved handling.

All-season Tires

The most common type of tire and arguably the best known is the standard all-season tire.

Many vehicles come equipped with these tires, which are designed to be versatile enough to grip the road in various conditions. They are commonly made of a harder rubber that will not wear out quickly and will retain their tread. Most day-to-day driving can

be done on all-season tires.

High-Performance Tires

People who live in dry climates or drive sports and racing cars can benefit from high-performance tires.

These tires are specifically designed to grip the road better and offer superior handling under higher speeds. Because high-performance tires are made of a softer rubber compared to standard tires, they will not last as long as all-season tires.

Snow Tires

People who live in snowy, icy conditions will benefit from the use of snow tires. These tires are designed with special treads to offer more traction in slippery conditions. The rubber used to manufacture the tire can remain flexible even at extremely low temperatures.

Winter tires are best reserved for extreme weather and not used

all season long because they will wear out more quickly than others.

They may not have the same level of traction on clear roads. In some cases, winter tires may have metal studs included to enhance traction in icy situations. People who do not want to switch tires when cold weather arrives sometimes invest in snow chains that improve traction on standard tires.

Mud Tires

Muddy areas can be just as slippery as snowy conditions. Mud tires are designed similarly to snow tires but will have extra grooves

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SELF-DRIVING

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GPS and inertial measurement units will help to keep track of the vehicle's location and various movements. Data is also programmed into the car so it can differentiate stationary objects like poles and mailboxes from factors in the environment, such as pedestrians or

construction. The Google vehicles also are programmed to follow road rules and make assessments of changing situations, such as advancing at a four-way-stop if other drivers have not yet moved into the intersection. The goal of self-driving car manufacturers is

to reduce congestion and accidents and keep traffic flowing more smoothly. Automakers will continue to conduct research to see how well self-driving cars and the people inside them work together.

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