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## Keeping Your Vehicle in Tune With the Environment

Car care is definitely a win-win situation. Besides helping the environment, a properly maintained and operated vehicle will run more efficiently, will be safer, and will last longer—up to 50% longer, according to a survey of National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE)-certified Master Auto Technicians. The following tips should put you on the road to environmentally conscious car care:



**Keep your engine tuned.** A misfiring spark plug can reduce fuel efficiency as much as 30%. Follow the service schedules listed in your owner's manual. Replace filters and fluids as recommended.

**Check your tires for proper inflation.** Underinflation wastes fuel—your engine has to work harder to push the vehicle. Wheels that are out-of-line (as evidenced by uneven tread wear or vehicle pulling) make the engine work harder, too. Properly maintained tires will last longer, meaning fewer scrap tires have to be disposed. Every 10 days, motorists who drive with underinflated tires and poorly maintained engines waste 70 million gallons of gasoline, according to the Car Care Council.

**Keep your air conditioner in top condition** and have it serviced only by a technician certified competent to handle/recycle refrigerants. Air conditioners contain CFCs—gases that have been implicated in the depletion of the ozone layer. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, almost one third of the CFCs released into the atmosphere come from mobile air conditioners; some simply leaks out, but the majority escapes during service and repair—so it's important to choose a qualified technician.

**Do-it-yourselfers:** dispose of used motor oil, antifreeze/coolant, tires, and old batteries properly. Many repair facilities accept these items. Or call your local municipal or county government for recycling sites. Never dump used oil or antifreeze on the ground or in open streams. Each year, 20 times the amount of oil spilled by the tanker Exxon Valdez in Alaska is improperly dumped into America's environment by do-it-yourselfers, according to the Automotive Information Council

**Observe speed limits.** Mileage decreases sharply above 55 mph.

**Drive gently.** Avoid sudden accelerations and jerky stop-and-go's. Use cruise-control on open highways to keep your speed as steady as possible.

**Avoid excessive idling.** Shut off the engine while waiting for friends and family. Today's vehicles are designed to warm up fast, so forget about those five-minute warm ups on cold winter mornings.

**Remove excess items from the vehicle.** Less weight means better mileage. Store luggage/cargo in the trunk rather than on the roof to reduce air drag.

**Plan trips.** Consolidate your daily errands to eliminate unnecessary driving. Try to travel when traffic is light to avoid stop-and-go conditions. Join a car pool.  
Remember, how your car runs, how you drive it, and how its fluids, old parts, and tires are disposed of all have serious consequences on the environment.

*Source: National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence. (n.d.). Keeping your vehicle in tune with the environment. Retrieved July 25, 2008, from the Federal Citizen Information Center, General Services Administration website: <http://www.pueblo.gsa.gov/> This information was provided courtesy of ASE: National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence  
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