

# National Car Care Month



Will you be ready to take advantage of this opportunity to reinforce good relations with your current customers, establish new ones and make more profit?

**A**pril is National Car Care Month. This event is a great opportunity for you to strengthen your relationship with your current customers and create new ones. With a little preparation and planning, you can make this national event a successful, profitable venture for you and your shop.

The National Car Care Council and its “Be Car Care Aware” initiative have made it easy for you to put on a successful event by providing advice, suggested programs, sample advertising formats, artwork, logos and all the materials you need, and it’s available for purchase at a very reasonable cost. The “Be Car Care Aware” program, which runs year-round, is dedicated to educating consumers about the necessity of maintaining their vehicles.

The main purpose of National Car Care Month (NCCM) is to make vehicle owners and drivers aware of the need for routine preventive maintenance. But, it’s also meant to urge aftermarket repair facilities to educate the public in a personal, face-to-face manner.

Everyone benefits from such an event: Your shop benefits by educating customers, developing deeper ties to your customers, making contact with prospective new customers, servicing any needed maintenance work and possibly finding any serious problems that might affect a vehicle’s safety and operation. Your customers benefit by being educated about their vehicles, extending the life of their vehicles, ensuring safe driving and keeping their overall repair costs down.

Holding a National Car Care Month event is the perfect chance to network with your local community, your current customers and any potential new customers.

## The Cost of Neglect

More than \$60 billion of vehicle maintenance goes unperformed each year, according to AAIA. Last year, more than 400 service facilities set up “Check Lanes” during National Car Care Month. Using checklists, the shops found an amazing lack of maintenance. Overall, the net failure of any part or system was 85 percent of the vehicles inspected. Those statistics and accompanying observations by the NCCM surveys show the need for continued education for consumers.

### Lubricants and Fluids:

- Engine Oil 30%
- Transmission Fluid 26%
- Brake Fluid 23%
- Power Steering Fluid 21%
- Coolant (Flush) 20%
- Washer Fluid 18%
- Coolant (Low Surge Tank) 16%
- Coolant (Low Radiator) 11%
- Coolant (Leaks) 8%

Low fluid levels can affect the safe driving performance of the vehicle and damage internal parts if not properly maintained. Close to 30 percent of vehicles failed the inspection because of low, overfull or dirty motor oil. More than one-quarter of the vehicles inspected — 26 percent — had either low, overfull or burnt transmission fluid. Twenty-three percent had low or

contaminated brake fluid. Twenty-one percent had low or dirty power steering fluid and 18 percent failed the washer fluid inspection.



*Almost 30% of the vehicles inspected had dirty oil, or an under- or over-filled crankcase.*



*If you have one of these neat brake fluid testers, this is an excellent opportunity for using it.*



*Does that coolant need to be flushed? In 20% of the cases, yes.*

The cooling system protects against damage by keeping the engine operating within the correct temperature range. More than one-tenth of the vehicles inspected — 11 percent — had low levels of coolant in the radiator and 16 percent had low coolant levels in their surge tank. One-fifth of the vehicles inspected needed a coolant flush, which serves to protect the system from rust, dirt and mineral deposits. An additional 8 percent of vehicles had coolant leaks.



*New rear wiper blades were needed in 12% of the vehicles examined.*

### Windshield Wipers:

- Windshield Wipers 17%
- Rear Wiper or Washer 12%

Close to one-fifth of vehicles — 17 percent — had front windshield wiper failures and 12 percent of vehicles needed service on their rear wipers and/or washers.



*Believe it or not, almost a quarter of the vehicles checked needed a new air filter.*



*There's a big profit opportunity in the fact that 17% of the vehicles were overdue for at least one hose.*

#### Parts:

- Air Filter 24%
- Belts 19%
- Hoses 17%
- PCV Filter 13%

#### Battery:

- Cables, Clamps or Terminals 13%
- Carrier/Hold Down 7%

Roadside breakdowns can be avoided by motorists periodically checking their belts and hoses and replacing them when worn. At least one belt was reported as unsatisfactory in nearly one-fifth of the vehicles inspected — 19 percent — and 17 percent of the vehicles required at least one new hose.

The air filter keeps abrasive dust, dirt, bugs and other foreign matter out of the engine intake. A dirty filter can decrease performance and gas mileage and increase emissions. Approximately one-quarter of the vehicles checked — 24 percent — needed new air filters. In addition, 13 percent of vehicles were in need of new PCV filters.

Battery cables, clamps and terminals were found to need maintenance in 13 percent of the vehicles and 7 percent of the batteries were not properly held down.

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### Tires:

- Tire Pressure 21%
- Tire Depth 16%
- Tire Condition (Damage) 11%



*You won't be surprised to hear that 21% of the tires checked were low on air.*

Low tire pressure decreases gas mileage and tire life, and compromises safety because the vehicle will not handle as designed. Vehicles traveling with worn tread are at greater risk of losing traction on wet or snowy roads. Twenty-one percent of the vehicles were found to have improperly inflated tires and 16 percent had worn tread and were in need of replacement. An additional 11 percent of vehicles had damaged tires that were in poor condition.

### Lights/Vision:

- Brake Lights 13%
- License Plate Lights 9%
- "Check Engine" Light 6%
- Backup Lights 5%
- Side Lights 5%
- Turn Signals 5%
- Parking Lights 3%
- Headlights 3%
- Tail Lights 2%

Vehicle lighting provides a means of communicating among drivers and is vital to any properly functioning vehicle. Thirteen percent of vehicles inspected needed

work on their left, right or third brake light. Nine percent of vehicles needed work on at least one of their license plate lights. Six percent of vehicles had their "Check Engine" light on (which, of course, indicates the need for further diagnosis). Five percent of vehicles failed due to an inoperative backup light and five percent failed their side light inspection. An additional five percent of vehicles needed work on at least one of their turn signals and three percent of vehicles failed the inspection for their parking lights. Three percent of inspected vehicles failed for their headlights while two percent failed because of their tail lights.

These statistics should be enough to convince you that there is plenty of maintenance and repair work out there on the roads waiting to be performed. All you have to do is make contact with the owners of these vehicles. One of the best ways to do that — without spending a fortune on advertising — is to hold a National Car Care Month event.

### Holding a NCCM Event

There are a number of ways to hold a NCCM event. You can simply put up banners and signage to attract attention, mail or e-mail your existing customer base, pass out flyers and wait for customers to arrive anytime during the month. Further, you can promote the event with publicity in your local newspapers, and on radio and TV stations.

Banners, signs and brochures are a great way to communicate to your customers about National Car Care Month. Whether or not you plan to sponsor vehicle check lanes or other promotions, NCCM banners help drum up new business with consumers.



*Make sure you have at least an OBD II code reader handy for use in the inspection lane.*

Or, you can dedicate a special day — say a Saturday in April — as a Customer Appreciation Day, during which you hold vehicle inspections by using “Check Lanes.” Set up a drive-through check lane in front of your shop or in a nearby parking lot (with permission of the owners, of course) and inspect vehicles using a check list. Remember to have your scan tools and other diagnostic equipment ready, along with an assortment of tools to make minor adjustments.

Any serious safety or operational problems should be corrected immediately in the shop. Minor adjustments and small things, such as tire filing can be done at little or no charge as you see fit. Shop work, of course must be done under your regular service rates. This is one of the benefits of holding such an event.

Customers should get a copy of the checklist and an explanation of the results. Appointments can be made for repairing any problems, but urge them to have any work done immediately or very soon, depending on the severity of the problem.



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You may want to serve refreshments or offer balloons for children. Giveaway items, such as calendars or pens from your shop, are also a good idea.

One highly recommended part of any NCCM event is the use of special promotional materials available from the Car Care Council. A free 42-page NCCM Event Planner can be downloaded at the organization's website. It offers many tips, hints and proven suggestions for holding a successful event. Among the promotional suggestions are signage, telephone "on-hold" messages, website banners, articles for print local media, scripts, graphics, photos and more.

The organization's "Be Car Care Aware" point-of-sale Starter Kit is the perfect way to begin. It contains a "National Car Care Month" poster, banner and a sample inspection form. In addition, it also contains lots of "Be Car Care Aware" banners, signage, posters, handouts, brochures and a counter mat for use year-round. It's available for a reasonable price on the website. Many items, such as brochures, are also available in Spanish.



*The Be Car Care Aware brochure can be given to your customers. They can keep it handy in the glove compartment.*

The organization offers a *Be Car Care Aware* brochure. Recently redesigned, this informative brochure familiarizes motorists with the opportunities for preventive maintenance in and around their vehicles. In addition to information about the "Be Car Care Aware" campaign, a full-size schematic of vehicle parts, components and maintenance recommendations is included in the brochure.



*The Car Care guide is available from the Car Care Council.*

A handy *Car Care Guide* for motorists is also available from the Car Care Council. Focus group research revealed that shop owners, counterpersons and technicians would find the guide valuable when discussing recommended maintenance and repair to their customers. The 56-page guide covers nine major service occasions and 12 component groups of the vehicle, plus service interval recommendations, a maintenance log and much more.

You can find the Car Care Council's Be Bar Care Aware Initiative and National Car Care Month information at [www.CarCare.org](http://www.CarCare.org). You can call 240-333-1088 or e-mail [info@carcare.org](mailto:info@carcare.org).

Many manufacturers and distributors have special promotions to help you succeed. Your local Subaru N.E.W. Horizons Dealer stands ready to assist you with Genuine Subaru Parts during National Car Care Month.

Don't pass up the opportunity to grow your business. Make plans now to hold a National Car Care Month event in April. Once you do, you'll surely want to make it an annual event. ■



# Give 'em a Penny

**H**ere's a neat tip: Give everyone who attends your National Car Care Month event a penny. Show them how to check the tread depth of their tires, using the penny. Insert the penny into the tread. If the top of Abe Lincoln's head can be seen, the tread is worn to the point of replacement. Tell them to keep the penny in their glove compartment so they will always have a tool to check tread depth.

