

It's Time for the 21st Century Tune-up

Times are changing...cars are changing. One of the biggest changes in today's automotive industry is the perception of a "tune-up." Ask 10 vehicle owners their definition of a tune-up and chances are there'll be 10 different answers. The classic "tune-up" was once the heart of the automotive business and contrary to some beliefs, today's modern vehicles still need tune-ups to keep them performing at the most efficient levels.

The tune-up was historically associated with the routine replacement of key ignition system parts like spark plugs and ignition points, along with some basic adjustments to help "tune" the engine. Mounting pressure for increased fuel economy and lower emissions drove the car manufacturers to adopt electronics and to do away with ignition points in the '70s, along with the carburetor in the middle '80s. This eliminated the need for the replacement and adjustment of a growing number of ignition and fuel system parts.

As the pace of technology quickened, the procedures required to perform a traditional tune-up changed dramatically. Highly sophisticated ignition and fuel systems are now the norm, using one or more onboard computers to control critical engine and transmission management functions. Things that were once handled mechanically are now controlled electronically through the widespread use of onboard computer technology.

Because vehicles have changed so much over the years, the Car Care Council has introduced the 21st Century Tune-up. This program is designed to help re-define and educate motorists as to what a tune-up should consist of on today's modern vehicles.

"There is a misconception that today's modern vehicles don't need tune-ups because they never break down, but that simply is not true," said Rich White, executive director of the Car Care Council. "If you're at work and your computer goes down, you can't get any more work done. It's the same with your vehicle. If the vehicle isn't being properly maintained, you're not going to get where you want to go."

As part of the 21st Century Tune-up on today's modern vehicles, the following systems should be inspected:

- battery, charging and starting
- engine mechanical
- powertrain control (including onboard diagnostic checks)
- fuel
- ignition
- emissions

Vehicle owners ask for tune-ups for a variety of reasons, including improving performance, maintaining reliability, planning a vacation, preparing for winter/summer or because they're giving the car to a friend or family member.

To help ensure good performance, fuel economy and emissions, the Car Care Council also recommends that motorists take the time necessary to become familiar with their vehicle from every aspect. Study the owner's manual to become thoroughly acquainted with the operation of all systems. Pay special attention to the indicator lights and instruments.

"The 'Be Car Care Aware' campaign is about helping motorists make informed decisions about their vehicles' care and maintenance," said White. "With the 21st Century Tune-up, we will continue to help vehicle owners make great strides in reducing vehicle neglect."

A new brochure is available that familiarizes motorists with the opportunities for preventive maintenance in and around their vehicle. The brochure contains information about the "Be Car Care Aware" campaign, a full-size schematic of vehicle parts, components and maintenance recommendations.

For more information, visit http://www.carcare.org/Industry/BCCA_brochure.shtml.