

## Tips for Young Drivers & Parents.

### KNOW BEFORE YOU GO:

**Owner's manual!** Familiarize yourself with its categories.

**Controls:** Learn where they are, what they do. For example, practicing lights, cruise control and radio operations now is safer than using trial-and-error while fighting traffic.

**Warning indicators.** Before driving, sit in the car with the manual, look up warning signals, and locate corresponding icons on the dashboard. Learn what to do when they come on. Better to know ahead than panic at the time. Generally,

- \* Yellow light indicates a problem but not one requiring immediate attention.
- \* Red light requires immediate attention.
- \* Flashing warning indicates a problem that should be addressed immediately otherwise engine damage may occur.

*Don't ignore any warning light long term. This may end up in serious repair problems costing more time and money than attending to it promptly.*

**UNDERSTAND MAINTENANCE** Knowing and following the car's maintenance schedule helps prevent breakdowns and repairs, prolongs the life of the car, & saves on long term operating costs.

**Fluid levels.** These are basic indicators of the condition of engine, steering, suspension & brakes. Routine checks include

- **Oil.** If low & black may indicate oil & filter change are overdue.
- **Brake fluid.** If low may indicate low brake pads; worn pads result in fluid level drop.
- **Radiator fluid.** If low may indicate leak, which will cause engine overheating if not repaired.

*With the exception of windshield washers, systems that use fluids are closed systems; fluid levels will not be low unless there is a problem!*

**Tire Pressure.** Improper inflation can cause premature wear, lower gas mileage, and poor handling.

- Find tire pressure information in your manual or inside driver's side door.

- Check pressure visually before each drive, and with gauge at least every 3 months.
- Don't ignore tire pressure warning light even if just inflated; pressure can drop quickly with a puncture.
- If warning light comes on, don't automatically add air; have tire inspected for weaknesses suggesting potential flat or blowout.

**Tire Condition.** Uneven wear shortens tire life. Road debris and potholes can compromise a tire's structural integrity. Caught early, problems may be corrected by alignment or rotation. Visual inspection is simple:

- Look in between each tread for horizontal bar of rubber which shows minimum tread depth.
- Check tire overall for uneven wear.

**BATTERY.** Jump-starting a battery in an emergency is a valuable skill for every driver. Doing it properly is important, especially in newer cars with computers and electronics. *Read instructions in owner's manual!* In general,

- Remove large personal jewelry or items which might catch or provide unwanted conductivity!
- In car with dead battery, turn off items which draw current; e.g. air conditioner, lights.
- Connect cables to car that will provide the starting current: red end of cable to red (+ symbol) battery terminal then black end of cable to black (-symbol) battery terminal.
- Attach other ends of both cables to dead battery similarly: red to red, black to black.
- Start the car which will provide the jump start & leave it running.
- Sit in your car with dead battery & attempt to start. When the engine catches, make sure it is running.
- Disconnect cables in reverse order. Let car run for a while before driving or using features which draw power.

**SET POLICIES.** Parents and teens should discuss, agree & sign to rules and policies before the new driver sets out. Examples are,

- Forbid phone-use, texting, alcohol or drugs.
- Follow speed limits.

- Restrict night-time driving.
- Specify number of passengers.

**EXPERIENCE.** Nothing can make up for time behind the wheel, but following basic guidelines can lead to a quicker track to safe driving. Important ones include:

- An approved safe driving course; many are available on line.
- Driver's Education course, giving experience behind the wheel with a professional instructor.
- Prescribed hours of driving supervision with a responsible adult.

**FINAL THOUGHT.** Setting a young driver off with knowledge can help prevent higher repair costs, keep the driver safe & give more peace of mind to parents.