

Ferris Auto Center

Volume 12

July

Provided to you by Rich Ferris
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The Pitfalls of Potholes

Potholes, chuckholes, craters. Call them what you want, but try to steer clear of them. Otherwise, you just might find your wallet flattened.

Carolyn Reynolds remembers that irksome winter well. She replaced one tire, then a second, then a third.

One by one, each tire was flattened after her Mercury Tracer hit potholes on streets in her southern Michigan town. The incidents all occurred in the same month.

"They all were on familiar roads near home and the potholes were never there before," the elementary school teacher said. "They just materialized. You don't anticipate them. You don't know to expect them and so you don't swerve to avoid them. They just get you."

The potholes cost Reynolds some \$200 for new tires, a lot of lost time and inconvenience.

Thankfully, she was unhurt from the pothole collisions and her car didn't sustain more serious damage. Bent wheels and broken or bent suspension and steering components also are likely pothole casualties. In fact, AAA Michigan reports the average cost of automotive repair bills blamed on poor roads in 2000 was \$478.

An Early Start This Year

The traditional start of pothole season is usually March, but this year an early and unusually cold winter saw potholes appearing early and in plentiful numbers in many areas of the United States and Canada.



Detroit's Wayne County, which estimates it fills 200,000 potholes annually, has been busy for months. Aurora, Colo., launched its annual Pothole of the Month contest to encourage drivers to report potholes. Contest winners receive a \$50 gift certificate good for merchandise at the local mall.

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Driving Tips:

Yes, You Can Cut Your Gas Bill In Half

1. Buy A Second Econo Car: Save your gas hog for long trips. Buy a 6-year-old compact to run short errands around town. Relax. It's money in the bank because used compacts hold their value. In a year or two, sell it or pass it down to your kids. (Estimated Savings: 10%)

2. Consolidate Your Errands: With a little pre-planning, you can take care of several errands at once. Check with other family members and eliminate unnecessary trips to the grocery store. (Estimated Savings: 10%)

3. Don't Be A Jackrabbit: Slow things down a bit. Being the first one out of the gate when the light changes wastes a lot of fuel. Don't tailgate and start slowing down before you come to a stop sign. Let the engine slow you down and use the brakes sparingly. (Estimated Savings: 2%)

4. Obey Speed Limits: Slow things down on the road. Drive the speed limit instead of 5-10 miles over. This includes city and highway driving. The faster you go, the more drag you create, using more gas. Also use cruise control. Avoid putting luggage or boxes on the roof of the car since this really increases drag. (Estimated Savings: 15%)

5. Proper Maintenance Checks: Change your air filter, fuel filter and gas filter at the recommended times so the engine runs at peak efficiency. Change your oil too because it has additives that can reduce the friction in your engine. Proper tire pressure is essential. Under inflated tires are a real drag. (Estimated Savings: 2% - 15%)

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Even Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co. wanted to alert drivers to pothole dangers and issued a press release stating "motorists are dodging more potholes earlier this year." It noted that in Milwaukee, calls about potholes to the city Public Works increased five-fold, with up to 30 callers daily. In Montreal, Councilor Richard Theoret of the Montreal Citizens' Movement said potholes not only are more numerous, they're bigger and deeper—extending down into the second layer of road asphalt.

Potholes Develop Over Time

Potholes form as pavement ages and weathers. Small cracks appear and pavement eventually begins to lose its ability to resist water. As water works its way down



into the pavement and expands as it freezes, it pushes up on the pavement. The weight of cars and trucks then can break up this newly uneven pavement, starting a pothole.

Increased traffic burdens on roadways and the growing age of our roads—some experts estimate they are built to last only about 40 years—make potholes more likely. So does repeated freezing/thawing weather cycles.

So what's a motorist to do?

Tips for Handling Potholes

AAA Michigan offers these tips on pothole avoidance and navigation:

- Keep your eyes on the road.
- If you come upon a pothole, try to slow down and avoid hitting it. But be sure to not endanger other drivers and pedestrians as you slow and maneuver.
- If you can't avoid the hole, keep both hands firmly on the steering wheel and steer in a straight line through the pothole to lessen the chance of losing control of the vehicle.
- Watch and listen to your vehicle carefully after going over a pothole. If you notice a noise and/or vibration from your tires, steering or suspension, pull off from the road in a safe area and check for damage. If you are unable to locate damage but the noise and/or vibration persists, take the vehicle in for a checkup as soon as possible.

Bill Egan, chief engineer of advanced technology for Goodyear, offered other advice:

- If it appears you will hit a pothole rather than avoid it, don't brake. Just steer straight and allow the tire to roll quickly over the hole. Braking, he said, transfers more load onto the front tires, which could cause more damage.
- Keep tires properly inflated. Goodyear suggests checking tire inflation at least once a month. Tires with low inflation can be "too soft" and can flex more than properly inflated tires. This flexing can lead to the rubber "enveloping the tire rim" and causing tire and possibly wheel damage.
- Note that taller tires—those with bigger sidewalls—tend to withstand potholes better than sporty, low-profile tires. The reason? There's less rubber available in the low-aspect tires to cushion the blow of hitting the pothole.

Potholes Can Be Deadly

While it's easy to joke about potholes, remember they aren't just road nuisances.

Above and beyond the cost of auto repairs, potholes also have led to injuries and fatalities. In 1995, for example, a 53-year-old woman died in a car crash that started when another driver's vehicle struck a large pothole and then hit the woman's car in Detroit.

A final note: Some municipalities and states reimburse motorists whose cars are damaged by potholes. You may need to file a claim or go to court. Check with government officials where you live.

By Ann Job

Bumper Snickers

Everyone has a photographic memory. Some don't have film.

A day without sunshine is like, well, night.

On the other hand, you have different fingers.

Change is inevitable, except from a vending machine.

Honk if you love peace and quiet.

Keeping your car looking nice

Waxing your vehicle will help remove paint oxidation and surface dirt, while adding a protective coating. Wax will improve or remove minor damage such as surface scratches or light contaminants and provide a high-luster finish. Again, consult your vehicle's manual for specific recommendations.

The Waxing Process

Basic guidelines to bear in mind:

1. The paint surface should be cool and not in direct sunlight.
2. Always wash the vehicle immediately before waxing.
3. The temperature should be above 50 degrees Fahrenheit and the humidity should be low.
4. Apply the wax to a small section at a time using either a foam pad or small terry cloth towel.
5. Apply the wax in overlapping strokes or circular motions.
6. Wait for a section to dry to a haze before wiping the wax off with soft, terry cloth towels or cloth diapers.
7. Wipe in both directions, turning the towels often.
8. Shake the towels to remove accumulated wax.
9. When finished, wipe the entire vehicle again, paying particular attention to the edges of trim pieces, door jambs and moldings where excess wax may have accumulated.

For additional shine between wax jobs, several manufacturers offer spray-and-wipe products to quickly enhance the vehicle's shine, such as Turtle Wax Emerald Series Premium Detailer and Meguiar's Quik Detailer.

If your vehicle's paint has been damaged, the paint may need additional work requiring the use of other types of products. You should consult a professional detail shop, auto paint repair shop, or car care product manufacturer for advice before using any products that contain abrasives.

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SATELLITE RADIO COMING SOON

Tired of commercials? Tired of the same Top-10 Country Hits?

Satellites are now in place to start beaming commercial-free music to drivers. It all started with the OnStar System.

The cost will be about \$120 a year and will follow drivers coast-to-coast with a strong radio signal.

Manufacturers have yet to offer radios that can receive such a signal. Expect this option to cost around \$200 according to Automotive News.

MAY WE HELP YOU BATMAN - I MEAN MR. PRESIDENT -

As the ad states, "this is not your father's car..." Cadillac won the bid for a new presidential car. A shiny new Cadillac DeVille sports the license plate USA 1. Its passenger is George W Bush.

Popular Mechanics goes into detail about President Bush's new car about how it was completely redesigned. "...the car is equipped with such enhancements as an integrated 10-disc CD changer, a fold-a-way desktop, and reclining rear seats with massaging, adaptive cushions."

Besides 5-inch thick military grade armor, this DeVille includes Night Vision, five antennas and grab handles for Secret Service Agents.

What a ride!

DESIGNING WOMEN

Well, it's about time. Designers are waking up to the fact that women now drive trucks and SUV's.

You'll find women in key designer rolls for most of the major manufacturers.

According to USA Today, women now make up 11% of truck buyers. Input from women designers includes: redesigned door handles that won't break your fingernails, larger storage compartments, softer ride, and grocery bag holders.

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Start Something



We'll Be There



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6. Carpool: I know. We did this during the last gas crisis. Although, this is not a crisis yet, and probably won't be, there are better things to spend your money on than gas. (Estimated Savings: 10%)

7. Buy Regular Fuel: Most vehicles today run very well on regular gas. There is no law that requires you to burn premium. Burning premium might give you a little better performance. The car really doesn't care. It will still get you from point A to point B. Consult your Owner's Manual. (Estimated Savings: 10%)

8. Sky Miles: That's right. I said sky miles. Apply for a Delta Sky miles Credit Card from American Express. For every dollar spent you get one sky mile. Why not get rewarded for paying ridiculous gas prices. (Estimated Savings: 2%)

9. Shop Around: Gas prices can vary from station to station. Usually, there's one chain that sells gas \$.05 cheaper. (Estimated Savings: 2%)

Total estimated gas savings of 63% to 77%



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for a real car?***

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Your professional in the automobile industry!

***Driving
Excitement***



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