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TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR CAR: Automotive Expert Courtney Hansen and 3M Car Care Offer Simple Tips to Help Women Save Money on Their Car Maintenance

ST. PAUL, MN – It's the second largest investment for most women after their home, and it is requiring an increasing share of their pocketbook with the current economy. But how can today's women take charge of their cars to save money at the pump, protect themselves at the repair shop and preserve this valuable investment?

It's all about smart solutions that keep the car running smoothly, routine maintenance that ensures that components deliver lasting performance and regular attention that keeps the exterior appearance looking like new.

Courtney Hansen, 3M's automotive expert and host of Spike TV's "Power Block", says women should take charge of their car's maintenance and repairs and offers them the advice they need to do it comfortably. Hansen ranks four simple practices as critical to keeping the car healthy:

1. **Check tire pressure** - Improperly inflated tires can greatly reduce fuel economy and lead to excessive tire wear. The correct tire pressure also will guard against tire blowouts and provide a safer ride. Make sure tires are inflated to the manufacturer's recommended pressure listed on the inside of the driver's side door or driver's manual – not what is listed on the tire wall.
2. **Check the oil** - Oil keeps the engine lubricated, reduces friction and makes everything run efficiently. Checking the oil level regularly and keeping enough oil in the car is probably one of the easiest and most cost effective things a woman can do for her vehicle. Change the oil every 3,000 miles or three months for maximum performance and extended engine life.
3. **Maintain car's fluid levels** - Maintaining proper fluid levels is an essential and easy maintenance task. It can add thousands of miles to the life of the car. Using the owner's manual, locate the washer fluid, coolant and antifreeze containers under the hood and check the levels of each. The replacement fluids can be purchased at any auto supply store and easily refilled. This is important if you regularly travel long distances or are planning a road trip.
4. **Keep the car clean** – Washing and waxing your car regularly not only keeps it looking great, it removes harmful debris, road salt and other corrosive substances that can damage the finish. Hansen recommends using 3M Car Wash Soap, 3M One Step Cleaner Wax, 3M Scratch Remover and 3M Performance Finish for a great car wash from start to finish.

Be Prepared for the Body Shop

"A little knowledge at the body shop can go a long way, and save time and money," adds Hansen. "Fear is women's worst enemy in this environment, and this comes from lack of knowledge. But, there are some simple things women can do to understand the problem with their car and receive fair service at the garage."

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Evaluate the problem – If you don't know what the problem is, talk to someone who knows cars and let them look at the car before you go to the shop. If the car is making a strange noise, try to record the noise, and state when the noise occurs. If there are fluids under the car, note what color and where under the car. Any other details also are helpful.

Educate yourself - Search the Internet to find out information on the problem, the proper diagnosis and the average cost of the repairs. Check out the auto repair shop, too, for the qualifications and the certifications of both the auto mechanic and the shop itself.

Get opinions - Talk to different car mechanics, and ask their opinion on what type of car repair and maintenance is necessary. Ask other women that deal with their own car repairs for the name of a reliable car mechanic. Always get at least two opinions before any work is done.

Listen to the diagnosis - Compare your car manual and what you have read online to the mechanics recommendations. If the mechanic recommends a more expensive repair or routine maintenance than your research, be suspicious.

Keep an eye on the shop floor - The atmosphere and the physical aspects of the shop can indicate to you the type of service you could expect, but not always. Ask if you can watch while the maintenance or repair is being done. This could lead to finding out they replaced the old part with a used part, or didn't even change the part.

Ask for old parts back - Tell the mechanic ahead of time that you want all the used parts returned to you. Ask for filter after oil change to make sure it was changed. If the mechanic gets defensive or upset at your request, it is time to get worried. Ask for a receipt for all the parts that were replaced, even if the part was replaced with a used or rebuilt part.

Ask questions – The more you ask questions and show that you have an understanding of the process, the less likely the shop is going to rip you off.

“And before you even leave for the shop, watch your appearance when you go,” adds Hansen. “You want to be taken serious, so how look can result in how you will be treated.”

3M Car Care offers a comprehensive line of products for automotive maintenance. The innovative product line includes performance cleaning products, waxes, compounds, adhesives, abrasives and specialty products, previously available exclusively to the professional market. 3M's Automotive Aftermarket Division serves the automobile owner and hobbyist as well as professional body shop, recreational vehicle and mechanical service markets.

The 3M Car Care product line can be found at leading automotive aftermarket retailers and online through select distributors. For more information on 3M Car Care products, visit www.3Mcarcare.com

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