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## ***Complete Automotive Service and Repair***

Hello Everyone!

This month the topic is on oil change intervals. The big question is; how far should you really stretch them out? Vehicle manufacturers are extending oil change intervals to the extreme, claiming that the increased quality of today's engines and engine oils make the extended oil change intervals possible. Many vehicles are coming from the factory with an oil life monitoring system that will inform the driver when an oil change interval is coming due. The problem with these monitoring systems is that they have no idea of what quality motor or oil filter is being used in the vehicle. Most of these systems do not even monitor the type of driving conditions that the vehicle is subjected to. These monitoring systems are programmed with the assumption that every repair shop, oil change outlet and "Do-it-Yourselfer" is going to use factory quality motor oil and oil filters. Many times, this is not the case. Sometimes, it is the repair shop or oil change outlet that will choose lower quality products but more often, it is the vehicle owner that does not want to pay the price for the proper quality motor oil and oil filter.

The auto manufacturers claim that the extended oil change intervals are acceptable due to the higher quality of today's engines and engine oils are correct. The engines and engine oils are of much higher quality than in the past but the problem is that everyone's driving habits are different. A six or seven thousand mile oil change interval is fine for someone who does mostly highway driving but the person who drives mostly short trips will be sure to have early engine failure. The question that I would like answered before following the factory recommended oil change intervals would be; who pays for the repair should and oil related engine failure occur and will they still cover the cost of the repair if the vehicle is out of the manufacturer's warranty period? We have a large number of customers who have been performing 3,000-mile oil changes with 250 to 300,000 miles on their vehicles. Will this type of mileage still be possible with half as many oil changes? If not, again, who pays for the repair?

The correct way to extend oil change intervals is to have a sample of the motor oil tested to determine the remaining life of the motor oil. These tests measure contaminants in the motor oil and the effectiveness of the motor oil additives. The additives in the motor oil are what protect the vital parts in the engine and they also carry the contamination caused by the combustion process to the oil filter. Once these additives are depleted, engine wear increases along with sludge deposits in the engine, clogging up vital oil passages. The reduced oil flow will accelerate engine wear even more – it's a slippery slope. The problem with oil sample testing is that it costs about as much as an oil change does.

We have a commercial account that wanted to check the feasibility of extended oil change intervals. They started by picking five vehicles from their fleet. These vehicles consisted of small and intermediate cars, a light duty truck and a hybrid vehicle. The vehicles were driven on a daily basis in a variety of traffic conditions; some highway and some stop and go. The engine oil that they chose was Amsoil 15,000 mile full synthetic, and they used the Amsoil 15,000 mile oil filter. Amsoil full synthetic motor oil is a very high quality motor oil that exceeds all manufacturers' specifications. The test should have consisted of driving each vehicle 5,000 miles and then have an oil sample taken to be tested. Instead, at the 5,000 mile mark, they had us collect an oil sample and then replace the oil filter and add the proper amount of Amsoil motor oil to bring the oil level up to the full mark. This practice should have made the oil tests come out better because the remaining oil in the engine was diluted with fresh motor oil. When all the vehicles were tested at the 5,000 mile interval, all of the vehicles passed, but at the 10,000 mile interval, three of the five vehicles failed with a recommendation of having the engine oil changed immediately. The remaining two vehicles marginally passed the test but with the recommendation of changing the engine oil soon. To make matters even worse, the 5,000 mile service that they were doing, changing the oil filter and topping the oil was costing more than a regular petroleum oil change not to mention the cost of the oil sample test.

As far as a recommendation, I can only tell you what I do with my own vehicle. I do a lot of short trip driving, so I change my oil and filter every 3,000 miles. Could I increase it to 5,000 miles? Maybe, but I would rather spend a couple of extra dollars on oil changes than worry about oil testing or just gambling that I am not doing any damage to my engine. I have never had to replace an engine in one of my vehicles, and I do not want to start now. The other problem with extended oil change intervals is; who is going to check over the vehicle for regular wear and tear? Things like; fluid levels, tire wear and inflation, light bulbs, headlight operation, fan belts, hoses and brakes need to be checked regularly. Failure to catch a worn out brake pad can cause hundreds of dollars in additional repairs and we all know from the Ford Motor Company / Firestone fiasco, what happens when the tires are not properly inflated! I guess that all things eventually come down to dollars and cents. If you drive your vehicle 200,000 miles and perform 3,000 mile oil changes, you will have spent

\$1675.00 based on an average oil change cost of \$25.00. If you perform 6,000 mile oil changes, you will save \$875.50. The average remanufactured engine runs about \$5,500.00. Hmmmm....to me, it's a no brainer!

Ray Wells



Proper steps for checking your vehicle's engine oil:

- Shut off engine and allow oil to drain back to oil pan. (Approx. 3 minutes)
- Locate engine oil dipstick. (Most manufacturers will paint the handle yellow)
- Pull out the dipstick and wipe the oil from it with a clean rag.
- Re-insert the dipstick fully into the dipstick tube.
- Remove the dipstick and note the oil level on end of dipstick. Most manufacturers will use a crosshatch area that looks like a bunch of x's, but some will only use two holes.
- The full mark on the stick is at the top, or handle side of the crosshatch area or at the top hole if your stick does not have a crosshatch area.
- If the oil level is at the bottom of the crosshatch area or hole, add 1 quart of premium motor oil.

Looking for a safe car? Look no further than your local Chevrolet dealer. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has released its latest crash results and the 2012 Chevrolet Camaro was the first to pass with five stars in all categories. Starting in 2011, the NHTSA starting using tougher guidelines for its five star rating system and the Camaro tops the list!

**Gas is only \$1.25 a gallon!** Go to [www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm), which is an inflation calculator website from the United States Department of Labor. The calculator's beginning number on the screen is 1980. Type in \$1.25, which is about the

price that gas was in 1980 and click on calculate. The price that comes up is \$3.41, which is about what a gallon of gas costs today. How about that, the price of gas has not increased more than any other commodity.

If your vehicle has leather seats, you should buy a good leather conditioner and use it on a regular basis. The conditioner will keep the leather soft reducing the chances of the leather cracking with age.



Anyone who uses his or her Wells Automotive credit card or opens a Wells Automotive credit card will receive a 10% discount off his or her entire repair bill. There will not be any cap on the amount of money that you can save. As usual, any repair bill over \$299.00 will automatically receive 6 months interest free financing.

Castrol is continuing their \$7.00 mail in rebate program but with a twist. As usual, any person who has a Castrol GTX oil change performed on their vehicle will receive a mail in coupon for \$7.00 off their next oil change. If you have an oil change performed using Castrol's High Mileage oil, Synthetic Blend oil or Full Synthetic oil, you can receive up to a \$20.00 rebate toward your next oil change.

## >>>> FREE NEW YORK CITY TRIP <<<<

Register to win a grand prize trip for two to New York City including travel accommodations and dinner for two at a Rachael Ray recommended restaurant. First prize is a ten piece hard-anodized cookware set and second prize is a Rachael Ray Yum-O Family Cook Book. No purchase necessary to win. Registration forms available at the Wells Automotive front desk. A Rachael Ray Yum-O family cookbook will be given away to one lucky Wells Automotive customer who has entered in the drawing. Drawing date for the cookbook is Thursday, March 1 2012. Grand prize and first place drawing date will be on or about Friday, March 16 2012.

Wells Automotive now keeps in stock Castrol Full Synthetic, Synthetic Blend and High Mileage motor oils. Our basic petroleum motor oil is still Castrol GTX and we still carry a complete line of Mobil 1 full synthetic motor oils.

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