

Insurance company slams women drivers over maintenance

1st for Women Insurance is urging female motorists to take car maintenance more seriously for their own safety.



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"Several recent surveys suggest that women are very poor at maintaining their vehicles. This could put them and their vehicles at risk. We urge female motorists not to leave car maintenance to the last minute," said Robyn Farrell, executive head of 1st for Women Insurance.

Farrell continued: "The safety of your car on the road is largely affected by the running condition of its components, including shock absorbers, steering, tyres, and brakes. Vehicle component failure is a major contributing factor in car crashes on South African roads. Just think of how many accidents you read about where the cause is noted to be brake or tyre failure.

"When you leave oil and coolant levels to run low, windscreen wipers to fall apart, brake fluid to run dry, and tyre tread to wear bare, or you don't keep your tyres correctly inflated or your wheel alignment is wrong, your car becomes a risk to your safety."

According to a recent survey by Trust My Garage, an independent garage provider in the UK, 67% of women have never looked under their car's bonnet, and just under half never check oil levels.

Astonishingly low knowledge of simple car maintenance

These trends were echoed in a study by UK-based short-term insurer, Admiral, which showed that women have astonishingly low knowledge of simple car maintenance. It found that one in six (17%) women don't know how to change a wheel, check their vehicles' oil level, their tyre pressure, their tyre tread depths or their coolant levels.

In South Africa, where having oil, water and brake fluid levels checked is as easy as asking the petrol attendant at the next filling station, women shouldn't find it so hard to stay on top of these things.

"Take the extra five or 10 minutes it takes at your next petrol stop to have oil, water, brake fluid and tyre pressure checked. Oil levels on cars without sophisticated oil gauges should be checked on a weekly basis as running a vehicle with insufficient oil can cause engine damage. Incorrectly, or under-inflated tyres, can also seriously hamper your car's stability on the road. So, check these often," advised Farrell.

She also reminds ladies to stick to the service and maintenance schedules recommended by their vehicle's manufacturer, and ensure that tyre tread is within legal limits.

"It is vitally important to ensure that your car is fit to be on the road, for your safety's sake and the safety of other road users. Driving an unroadworthy vehicle is dangerous and if your car happens to be involved in an accident and it's deemed unroadworthy, no insurance company will approve the claim or cover the damage," warned Farrell.

Check list

The 16 safety-critical components and functions that should be checked regularly, especially before a long trip, are:

1. Tyres: including the spare wheel (tread and pressure);
2. Brake fluid;
3. Brake pads and discs (front and rear);
4. Shock absorbers (front and rear suspension);
5. Wheel alignment;
6. Exhaust system;
7. Steering mechanism (control arm, steering box and tie rod ends);
8. Visible belts and hoses (for cracks and corrosion);
9. Windscreen (cracks and visibility);
10. Wiper blades (should not be perished and should function properly);
11. Battery and battery fluid;
12. All exterior lights and indicators (should be in good working order);
13. Oil levels and oil filter;
14. Water levels;
15. Coolant / antifreeze levels; and
16. Seat belts (all present and functioning properly).

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