



Cost of car maintenance < Cost of a crash

With the myriad of expenses that we face every day, you may be tempted to put off vehicle maintenance to save a few bucks – and you certainly wouldn't be alone – but is saving a few bucks worth risking your life?

On average, five people die on Canada's roads each day. Though many of these collisions can be attributed to driving under the influence, driving distracted, or poor driving conditions, it would be ignorant to overlook the importance of the mechanical integrity.

Today's cars are safer than ever before, but with wear and tear, many of your car's critical safety components can degrade. Ignoring this fact can put you and your family at risk of having a collision or of being seriously injured in the event of a crash.

Brakes

It's no secret that your brakes are one of your car's most important safety components, but with use, your brake pads/shoes wear out, rubber seals and hoses deteriorate causing brake fluid leaks, and metal component can rust and corrode. As these parts degrade, you are required to use an increasing amount of force on the pedal to stop your vehicle and need an increasing amount of time to stop. When you only have a few seconds to react to a dangerous situation on the road, the condition of your brakes can make all the difference, so have them inspected regularly and never put off needed repairs.

Lights

Your lights are essential to ensuring proper visibility on the road. When driving, it is important that you can see and be seen to avoid collisions. Give yourself the best chance to arrive safely by regularly inspecting your lights and replacing them when necessary. You should also check your light covers to ensure that they are clean and clear. With the time, the plastic can degrade and cloud, distorting your light and reducing your field of view in the dark. The further you can see, the more time you have to react.

Steering and suspension

Like most of your car's components, the parts that make up your steering and suspension system are prone to wear and tear damage and may lead to dangerous situations. For example, if your tie rod ends fail you will lose all steering control of your vehicle and risk veering sharply on the road, and if your ball joints fail your suspension can collapse, also causing to lose all steering control. When navigating city streets or busy highways, a loss of steering control can be catastrophic, so be sure to have your steering and suspension system inspected regularly and replace any worn parts.

Tires

Your tires are your car's point of contact with the road and play a crucial role in your car's safety. Underinflated tires can cause your tires to overheat and blow out, while overinflated tires reduce your contact with the road and wear more quickly. Uneven tread wear and bald spots also cause problems because they reduce your control on the road, increase your stopping distance, and increase your risk of hydroplaning or skidding. Finally, relying on all-season tires in the winter can increase your risk of a collision by reducing your grip on the road in temperatures below 7 degrees Celsius. Check your tire pressure and tread wear regularly, have them rotated as per the manufacturer's recommendations, and use appropriate tires for the season to maintain maximum control.

Though vehicle safety technology is ever-improving, your car is not immune to wear and tear. Be sure to have your vehicle inspected regularly and to budget for unexpected repairs to avoid dangerous collisions. Spending a few bucks is certainly worth the peace of mind that your car will respond to your driving.

For more information on car care, visit www.BeCarCareAware.ca.