



**motor vehicle**

maintenance and safety  
information



## Watch for these symptoms

Any one symptom may mean a dangerous mechanical fault which could cause a crash if left unattended. These faults can be cured only by competent mechanics.

- ◆ You are driving along a country road at between 80 and 100 km/h and the car starts to vibrate.

**Keep your speed below the vibration point until you can have the problem investigated.**

- ◆ When you apply the brakes at almost any speed the car pulls to one side and you must apply corrective pressure on the steering wheel in order to keep a straight line.

**The car needs attention and repairs by a specialist. In an emergency the swerving tendency could cause collision with another vehicle or pedestrian since the driver would not have time to compensate for the fault.**

- ◆ The steering wheel wriggles in your hand at both high and low speeds.

**Inspect your tyres and if they are showing flat spots it is time for new tyres to be purchased. If your tyres are sound, take the car in for expert examination.**

- ◆ You must constantly steer the car back on to a straight course.

**Consult your owner's manual and make sure your tyres are at the correct pressure. If the problem continues, seek expert assistance.**

- ◆ The brake pedal sinks to the floor under light foot pressure.

**Take urgent steps to have repairs made. Do not drive the car in this condition as the brakes could fade altogether.**

- ◆ Suddenly there is excessive play in the steering and when the car is stationary the steering

wheel can be turned for a considerable distance without strain.

**Your car needs repairs without delay. Safe driving demands that the steering should respond constantly to your slightest movement of the steering wheel.**

- ◆ A rear wheel locks on light application of the brakes.

**Your car needs immediate repair. In an emergency the locking action could cause an uncontrollable skid.**

- ◆ Excessive noise or whistling is heard in the exhaust system.

**Have the exhaust system checked right away. If it's faulty, dangerous carbon monoxide gas can enter the car and make the driver and passengers drowsy in a matter of seconds. This could result in complete loss of control of the vehicle and either death in an accident or death from poisoning.**

- ◆ Directional signal lights won't operate.

**Until you can reach a service station, use hand signals.**

## Pre-holiday checks

Where to go, where to stay, what to do and what to take are almost always first considerations when planning a holiday. All too often the most important thing of all, the car, is overlooked. It stands to reason that if you want really trouble-free motoring you'll see that your car is in first class shape before you go. In fact, if you are hoping for an enjoyable holiday, you'll put a safety check right at the top of your list of preparations.

### Ask your mechanic

Unless you are an expert it is wise to leave the job to a qualified mechanic. Say that you are planning a motoring holiday and ask for a thorough check. Say that you want everything inspected with particular emphasis given to the four main trouble spots: tyres; brakes; steering; and lights. The following important items should be checked before starting out on any long trip, and can be checked by your mechanic during normal maintenance.

### Tyres

Should be properly inflated, have ample tread and be free of bulges, cuts, embedded stones, breaks and uneven wear. Don't forget to check your spare.

### Brakes

The handbrake should hold the car on any grade. The footbrake should stop the car evenly while the pedal is still 3 cm or more from the floor.

### Steering

Front wheels should be properly aligned. The steering wheel should be free of excess play.

## Lights

Headlights should operate properly and be correctly adjusted. Rear lights, stop lights and turn signals should all be checked for proper operation.

## Exhaust system

Make sure it is tight, quiet and free from leaks.

## Glass

All glass should be clean, and free from cracks, discolouration and unauthorised stickers.

## Windscreen wipers

Should work properly and wipe clearly; worn blades should be replaced with new ones. Keep the washer reservoir filled with solution.

## Mirrors

Adjust rearview mirrors for a clear view of the road behind.

## Horn

Should operate with a loud, clear signal.

## Radiator hoses

Any hoses that are cracked or feel soggy when squeezed need renewing.

## Fan belt

Replace if frayed or worn.

## Fluid levels

Keep yourself informed about all fluid levels by frequent checks. If you service your own vehicle double check that all drain plugs are securely closed to prevent leaks.

## **Plan your route before you leave**

If you are travelling a long distance, plan your trip well before you leave. Plan it in stages which will not leave you exhausted when you arrive. Be sure of the route you wish to take by studying the maps beforehand, not when you are driving. Start your trip in plenty of time so that you do not have to race the clock.

## **Load your car with care**

Your car is a carefully balanced unit and poor loading can completely change its handling characteristics. Load your car systematically. Heavy items should be stored within the wheel base leaving lighter parcels for the tail end. Remember that a heavy load in the boot can completely alter the height of your headlight beam. Never put a heavy article on the rear window shelf - it could fly forward in an emergency stop or accident. Be sure to allow easy access to items you may need on the journey - and to the spare wheel and toolkit.

## **Travelling with children**

Children must be in proper child restraints. Make sure the toys you take to keep the children occupied won't worry or distract the driver if hit with such items. The back seat is safer for children no matter what restraining method is used.

## **Check your roof rack**

If a roof rack is used for luggage, make sure every item is securely packed. Remember that the additional height adds to wind resistance and alters the centre of gravity of the vehicle - care must be taken in cornering.

## Avoid the bomb

The car has not yet been made that will just go on month after month without attention.

Everybody knows that coolant must be kept at a proper level in the radiator; the battery topped up regularly; and the oil level checked.

If these simple maintenance jobs are not performed the car soon will not run at all. Some maintenance jobs demand attention because they annoy; the squeaky door; the maddening rattle - often hard to locate; and the dashboard knob that falls off when operated.

Other maintenance jobs are directly related to safe running and, in many cases, these are the jobs which are carelessly overlooked, usually because an amateur mechanic cannot deal with them. Too many drivers compensate in their driving for faults which could easily be the cause of a road accident. If the steering pulls to the left when the brakes are applied, the driver learns to compensate by turning the wheel to the right.

From the day a car leaves the manufacturing plant it starts to wear and this process involves the gradual deterioration of vital working parts. Unless action is taken to replace or adjust malfunctions the car becomes a 'bomb' - with all the lethal potential of that word.

## Budget for safety

Every car owner knows that there is a series of expenses in running a car; the petrol must be replenished; insurance and registration fees paid; and servicing carried out. Every car owner who values safety must add a budget for repairs and maintenance.

The owner must also learn to recognise the tell-tale clues which indicate that the car is in less than perfect condition. Apathy is a big problem in the maintenance of a car in safe mechanical condition. Taking the car to a qualified mechanic for repairs is an out-of-the-routine chore which many will avoid. Statistics of accidents caused by faulty vehicles are made by such people. But the biggest hazard is the ability of most drivers to compensate for faults in their vehicle - often without being aware of it. Consequently when roadworthy tests are made the great majority of cars are found to have faults.

## contact details

### **New South Wales and ACT**

388 George Street  
Sydney NSW 2000  
GPO Box 244 Sydney NSW 2001  
DX 10150 SSE  
Tel. (02) 8224 4000 Fax (02) 8224 4565

### **Victoria**

485 La Trobe Street  
Melbourne VIC 3000  
GPO Box 390D Melbourne VIC 3001  
DX 281 Melbourne  
Tel. (03) 9601 8222 Fax (03) 9601 8242

### **Queensland**

Level 11 189 Grey Street  
South Bank QLD 4101  
GPO Box 9902 Brisbane QLD 4001  
Tel. (07) 3135 1900 Fax (07) 3135 1573

### **South Australia and NT**

Level 8 80 Flinders Street  
Adelaide SA 5000  
GPO Box 9902 Adelaide SA 5001  
Tel. (08) 8405 6300 Fax (08) 8405 6444

### **Tasmania**

Level 5 188 Collins Street  
Hobart TAS 7000  
GPO Box 1373 Hobart TAS 7001  
Tel. (03) 6230 4748 Fax (03) 6230 4740

### **Western Australia**

Level 4 46 Colin Street  
West Perth WA 6005  
PO Box 7018 Cloisters Square  
Perth WA 6850  
Tel. (08) 9264 2222 Fax (08) 9254 3601

**Website:** [www.cgu.com.au](http://www.cgu.com.au)



*Insurer*

**CGU Insurance Limited**

ABN 27 004 478 371

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