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SPRING CAR CARE | CORROSION

Spotting Early Signs of Rust

Rust can develop quietly on a vehicle long before it becomes obvious. Catching corrosion early helps prevent costly repairs and keeps your car looking and functioning its best.

With spring rains, melting snow and leftover road salt creating ideal conditions for corrosion, this is a smart time to look for the earliest warning signs. Knowing where rust appears, how to stop it and when to call a professional can help extend the life of your vehicle.

WHERE RUST USUALLY APPEARS FIRST

Rust tends to form in areas exposed to moisture, salt and road debris. The undercarriage is one of the most common places for corrosion to begin because it takes the brunt of mud, slush and winter road treatments. Brake lines, exhaust components and frame rails are especially vulnerable.

Wheel wells and fender edges are frequent trouble spots. Dirt and salt can collect along the inner lip of the fender, slowly wearing away protective coatings and exposing metal. Door bottoms often trap water, especially when drain holes become clogged. When moisture cannot escape, it sits inside the door and



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gradually corrodes the metal from the inside out.

Other early rust locations include rocker panels, around windshield edges, the trunk floor and areas where paint has chipped. Any exposed metal can begin corroding quickly once the protective finish is compromised.

HOW TO IDENTIFY EARLY RUST

Early rust usually appears as

small bubbles under the paint surface. These bubbles indicate moisture has worked its way beneath the paint and is beginning to oxidize the metal. Surface rust may appear as light discoloration or tiny orange spots.

Flaking paint, rough patches or areas that feel gritty to the touch are additional warning signs. Rust often spreads underneath the paint long before it becomes visible, so

small changes in texture can signal a bigger problem developing beneath the surface.

Underneath the vehicle, rust may look like flaking metal, scaling or reddish-brown patches. Using a flashlight during your inspection can help you spot areas of concern more easily.

HOW TO STOP RUST IN ITS EARLY STAGES

When rust is caught early,

stopping it is often straightforward. Surface rust can usually be sanded away with fine-grit sandpaper. Once the area is smooth, applying a rust converter helps neutralize any remaining oxidation. After that, a primer and matching touch-up paint protect the metal from moisture.

For slightly deeper rust where the metal has begun to pit, you may need a more thorough cleanup. Removing all the affected material is crucial to prevent rust from returning.

Rust-inhibiting primers and sealants can help reinforce the repair and slow future corrosion.

Regular car washes, especially during spring when leftover salt remains on the roads, are one of the best ways to prevent rust from forming. Washing the undercarriage reduces buildup that accelerates corrosion.

WHEN TO SEE A PROFESSIONAL

If rust has caused bubbling over a wide area, created holes or reached structural components, it is time to seek help from a professional. Advanced rust can compromise the frame, brake lines or suspension parts, making the vehicle unsafe.

Auto body shops have the tools and expertise to safely remove significant rust and restore the affected areas. They can assess whether the damage is cosmetic or structural and recommend the appropriate repairs.



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Resetting Car Tech After Winter

Winter can be hard on vehicles, and modern cars rely on a range of sensors and tech features that may need attention once the weather warms.

Cold temperatures, road salt, moisture and grime can interfere with cameras, GPS systems and safety sensors. Taking time to reset and recalibrate these features in the spring helps ensure they function properly and keeps you safer on the road.

RECALIBRATING SENSORS FOR SPRING DRIVING

Advanced driver assistance systems rely on sensors placed around the vehicle. These include parking sensors, blind spot detectors, collision avoidance systems and lane departure alerts. Winter conditions often cover or disrupt these sensors with ice, slush or debris, which can lead to false alerts or reduced performance.

Start by giving your car a thorough wash, making sure to clean around bumpers, grilles and the areas where sensors are housed. Road salt can leave residue that interferes with accuracy, so paying attention to small crevices is important.

Some vehicles recalibrate automatically as you drive. Others may display warnings that indicate calibration is



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needed after battery disconnections or sensor obstructions. If error messages persist, technicians can perform a professional recalibration using specialized tools. This step is especially important after body repairs or windshield replacement, as those changes can shift the alignment of key sensors.

UPDATING GPS MAPS AND SOFTWARE

GPS systems and navigation apps tend to become outdated over time. Roads change, new intersections are added and

updated routes may not appear on older maps. Spring is a good time to install map updates so you're prepared for road trips and daily travel.

Many vehicles now offer over-the-air updates through built-in Wi-Fi or mobile connections. Others may require downloading updates onto a USB drive or visiting a dealership. Keeping maps current helps avoid unexpected detours, reduces travel time and improves the accuracy of estimated arrival times.

Beyond maps, spring is also a smart time to update your

car's infotainment or safety software. These updates can improve system performance, add new features or fix known issues.

CHECKING BACKUP CAMERAS AND VISIBILITY FEATURES

Backup cameras are exposed to winter's harshest elements. Snow, slush and road salt can coat the camera lens, reducing visibility or causing the picture to appear blurry. A simple cleaning with a soft cloth and a bit of window cleaner is often enough to restore clarity.

If the display still seems unclear after cleaning, check for cracks or moisture inside the lens. Backup camera housing can loosen over time, especially in areas hit hard by winter potholes. Securing the housing or replacing damaged parts can restore a clean, reliable image.

Spring is also a good time to examine other visibility features such as 360-degree cameras, side-view cameras or parking assist cameras. Ensuring these systems are clean and aligned improves both convenience and safety.

SPRING CAR CARE | A SMOOTH RIDE

Spring Suspension Check-Up

Winter weather leaves behind more than melting snow and slushy roads.

It often creates potholes, rough patches and uneven surfaces that can take a toll on your vehicle's suspension system. As spring arrives, it's a good time to assess whether winter driving has caused wear or damage. Understanding how potholes impact suspension components and knowing the early warning signs of trouble can help keep your car safe and comfortable on the road.

HOW POTHOLES DAMAGE YOUR SUSPENSION

Potholes form when moisture seeps into cracks in the pavement, freezes and expands. By spring, those once-small cracks may have grown into large holes. Hitting a pothole forces the suspension to absorb a sudden, sharp impact, which can strain or bend important components.

Shocks and struts are often the first parts affected. These components control how your vehicle absorbs bumps and maintains tire contact with the road. A severe pothole hit can cause them to leak, bend or lose effectiveness.

Control arm bushings, ball joints and tie rods can also suffer damage. These parts keep the wheels aligned and help maintain stable steering. When jolted by potholes, they



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can loosen or wear out prematurely. Over time, this affects the vehicle's handling and increases tire wear.

Even the springs in your suspension system can crack or shift under repeated impacts. A damaged spring may cause your vehicle to sit unevenly or sag on one side.

WARNING SIGNS OF SHOCK OR STRUT PROBLEMS

Shocks and struts wear

down gradually, but pothole damage can speed up the process. Pay attention to how your vehicle feels as you drive. If the ride becomes noticeably rougher or bouncier, the suspension may need attention.

One common sign is excessive bouncing after hitting a bump. If the car continues to bob up and down instead of settling quickly, the shocks or struts may be worn. Nose-diving during braking or swaying

while turning are indicators of failing suspension components.

Uneven tire wear, especially on the edges, can signal that the suspension is no longer keeping the tires aligned properly. This affects handling and shortens the life of the tires themselves.

Unusual noises offer additional clues. Clunking, knocking or squeaking sounds when going over bumps often point to worn bushings, loose

components or failing ball joints.

CHECKING BUSHINGS AND OTHER COMPONENTS

Bushings are cushions made of rubber or polyurethane that help absorb vibration and allow parts of the suspension to move smoothly. Over time they can crack, split or deteriorate, especially after encountering potholes or harsh winter road debris.

If bushings are worn, you may notice vibrations in the steering wheel or hear rattling sounds from underneath the vehicle. The car may feel less stable when turning or driving over uneven surfaces.

Inspecting bushings visually can be difficult without lifting the car, so a professional inspection is often recommended. Mechanics can check alignment, springs, ball joints and tie rods for early signs of damage.

PROTECTING YOUR SUSPENSION THROUGH THE SEASON

A spring suspension check-up helps prevent small problems from developing into more expensive repairs. Driving carefully around potholes, avoiding deep water that may hide road damage and keeping tires properly inflated can reduce strain on suspension parts.

If you notice any changes in handling, noises or uneven tire wear, scheduling a professional inspection is a smart move.



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