

How to recognize potential brake problems

Maintaining a vehicle is more than just a way to protect one's financial investment. Vehicle maintenance can protect against accidents and make the road safer for drivers and their passengers as well as their fellow motorists.

Fully functioning brakes are an important component of automotive safety. In its 2015 Crash Stats report, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration said that brake-related problems accounted for 22 percent of crashes where vehicular failure was cited as the cause of the collision. Bad brakes are particularly notorious for rear-end collisions. Faulty, worn brake lines, antilock brake system malfunctions and worn brake pads and discs are some potential brake problems.

It is important that motorists learn to recognize the first symptoms of brake trouble so they can address issues before they put drivers, their passengers and other motorists at risk of accident or injury.

· Unusual noises: Screeching, grinding, rubbing, and high-pitched sounds are common indicators that brake pads, rotors and other parts of the braking system need attention. Worn pads can cause damage to other vehicle parts, resulting in more expensive repairs if they're not addressed promptly.

· Pulling: If the car pulls to one side when applying the brakes, this may indicate brake pad linings are wearing down unevenly. A brake adjustment may be necessary. Pulling also may be indicative of an object or debris caught in the brake fluid.

· Less responsive: If when pressing on the brake pedal the brakes just do not seem to be as effective as they once were, or it is necessary to press the pedal harder for the brakes to engage, there may be a brake fluid leak or an air leak. Check under the vehicle to see if any fluids are pooling.

· Pungent odors: Firestone Tire Company says a burning smell may be indicative of worn out brake pads and friction on the tires. Each of these issues requires immediate attention.

· Vibrations: Certain vibrations may indicate brake issues. Rotors can become warped from metal-on-metal rubbing, potentially leading to a failure of the vehicle to brake properly. Vibrations also may indicate tires are misaligned. These problems can be properly assessed by a trained mechanic.

Do not let potential brake problems go unchecked. Keeping brakes in good working order helps drivers stop more readily and avoid collisions.



Drivers must address symptoms of a faulty braking system early on to reduce their risk of accidents.

4 reasons to skip topping off at the filling station

The familiar click of the nozzle when filling up at the gas station is recognizable to anyone with a few miles of driving under their belt. Once that nozzle clicks, just about every driver faces the decision of whether or not to squeeze

a few extra cents' worth of gas into their vehicles or remove the nozzle from their vehicles, place it back where it belongs and head off on their way.

Such scenes play out every day across the globe, and it's

likely that the majority of drivers try to squeeze a few extra drops into their tank. While topping off can seem like a financially savvy way to delay your next trip to the filling station, doing so may only cost drivers and the planet they call home. The following are four great reasons to skip topping off the next time you pull into a filling station.

1. Topping off costs you money.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, drivers who top off at the pump are likely paying for gas they're not getting. That's because gas station pumps have vapor recovery systems that feed gas vapors back into their tanks in an effort to decrease air pollution. So any gas that drivers try to pump into their tanks after the nozzle has clicked may only be drawn into the vapor line and fed back into the gas station's

tanks and not your vehicle's fuel tank.

2. Topping off may damage your car.

Topping off won't just hurt your pocketbook; it can potentially damage your vehicle as well. Fuel tanks need extra room inside them so gas can expand while the car is being operated. Without room to expand, gas may evaporate into the vehicle's vapor collection system, which can damage the system and produce greater gas emissions, thereby harming the planet.

3. Topping off can affect the air you breathe.

If you had a choice, would you pay extra for more air pollution? Likely not. But the EPA notes that this is precisely what many people are doing when they top off their gas tanks. When vehicles' fuel tanks are overfilled, gas vapors can escape into the air

and produce toxic air pollutants. That adversely affects air quality, which ultimately affects your health as well.

4. Topping off can cost the gas station money.

Many drivers may wonder why gas stations, who would seemingly benefit financially from topping off, post signs that forbid topping off. But the EPA notes that gas stations are likely to lose money due to drivers squeezing an extra few cents' worth of gas into their vehicles. That's because topping off can damage the station's vapor recovery systems, causing them to operate improperly and requiring potentially costly maintenance.

Topping off at the filling station may seem like a savvy move. But drivers, their vehicles and the planet are best served by taking the pump handle out of the tanks at the familiar sound of the nozzle's click.

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