

Vehicle Maintenance Guidelines

Vehicle maintenance can take the form of three distinct programs: preventive maintenance, demand maintenance and crisis maintenance. While all three types have their role in the fleet loss control program, the most cost effective is preventive maintenance.

The groundwork for a good preventive maintenance program starts with management. A review of the vehicle manufacturer's specifications and recommendations for periodic preventive maintenance should be integrated with the actual experience of the fleet. The fleet administrator must be careful not to void the manufacturer's warranty when approving periodic repairs.

Preventive maintenance (PM) is performed on a mileage or time basis. Typical PM jobs include oil/filter changes, lubrication, tightening of belts and components, engine tune-ups, brake work, tire rotation, hose inspection/replacement and radiator maintenance. A well defined, consistently applied PM program will result in the lowest total vehicle maintenance cost.

Demand maintenance is performed only when the need arises. Some vehicle parts are replaced only when they actually fail. These include light bulbs, window glass, gauges, wiring, air lines, etc. Other "demand maintenance" items involve vehicle components that are worn based on information from the vehicle condition report. These items could include tires, engines, transmissions, universal joints, bushings, batteries, etc. Since these situations are identified via periodic vehicle inspection, they can be classified within the PM program.

Crisis maintenance involves a vehicle breakdown while on the road. While situations of this type may happen regardless of the quality of the PM program, it is an expensive alternative to not having as effective PM program at all. Crisis maintenance situations should be minimized through proper PM procedures.

Every good maintenance program includes a thorough and up-to-date record keeping program. Management cannot guess about maintenance costs and past performance of vehicles or accessories. Good preventive maintenance and written records can reduce liability. To be useful, maintenance records must:

- Clearly identify the vehicle.
- Be kept current.
- Only record meaningful data.
- Be reviewed on a periodic basis.

When selling a car, maintenance records should be provided and any concerns pointed out.