

Protecting Our Vital Tools Of Travel: Our Vehicles

If ever you succumb to an impulse to drive the full length of Greene County's roadways, be sure to allow yourself plenty of time.

Greene County has more than 1,200 miles of road within its borders, near the top of the list in Tennessee per-county mileage.

Though most Greene Countians may never need to travel every county road, almost travel at least some of them in the course of an average day and week. Few of us could pursue our livelihood without our cars, SUVs or trucks.

Without a doubt: of all the mechanical tools used in daily life, our vehicles are probably the most important. They carry us to our jobs, our homes, our schools, our medical visits, our churches.

It makes sense, then, to assure our vehicles are being protectively maintained so they can serve us as efficiently and as long as possible.

In this special annual supplemental publication of The Greeneville Sun, we are pleased to bring you, with the support of numerous fine advertisers, information we motorists need to



know to help keep ourselves safely on wheels, and keep those wheels turning for a long time.

We encourage you to read these informative stories and support the advertisers who make this

edition possible. We deeply appreciate them, and we appreciate you, our readers.

Safe travels!

Little Things Can Make A Big Difference For Your Car

Did you know that something as simple as paying attention to the tightness of your car's gasoline tank cap can save you money? Are you aware that cruise control used in the right way and travel conditions can be a fuel-saver? And using it in the wrong conditions can be dangerous?

Drivers who want to drive more efficiently and safely can implement a variety of strategies to do just that. Below are five simple "driving hacks" that can pay off for you, your vehicle, and your wallet long-term. And they might help you avoid a highway tragedy or two.

1) Obey the speed limits and be aware of factors such as your vehicle's "blind spots."

Speed limits are determined with safety in mind, and drivers should always adhere to posted speed limits to protect themselves, their passengers and others on the road. The U.S. Department of Transportation notes that about 27 percent of motor vehicle crash deaths are speeding-related. But according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, obeying the speed limit is also cost-effective. The EPA notes that MPG begins to dip dramatically when vehicles travel above 55 miles per hour. While each vehicle is different, the EPA notes that increasing highway cruising speed from 55 miles per hour to 75 miles per hour can raise fuel consumption by as much as 20 percent.

Apart from fuel economy issues, it also enhances safety when drivers are patient with one another, don't mistake the roadway for a racetrack, and avoid sudden and insufficiently pre-examined lane



shifts. Don't forget that there are probably areas around your moving vehicle that you can't readily see in your mirrors.

2) Do not idle your vehicle.

The Environmental Defense Fund notes that electronic engines do not need to warm up, even in winter when temperatures are especially cold. Vehicles that are idling can produce as much pollution as vehicles that are in motion, and idling for as little as 10 seconds wastes more gas than restarting the engine. Drivers concerned about overtaxing their engines shortly after starting them can warm their engines by easing into their drives and avoiding excessive revving.

3) Use cruise control the right way.

Drivers concerned about fuel economy may be accustomed to turning on their vehicles' cruise control when driving long distances on the highway. While that is an effective and fuel-efficient way to maintain steady speeds, turn cruise control off when traversing roads with steep hills. On such roads, fuel efficiency can be lost because the vehicle engine is working harder to maintain steady

speeds.

Properly using cruise control when driving on highways can improve fuel economy. Be sure to use cruise control only in open-road, good weather conditions in which vehicles are not clustered around you and you won't likely need to do repeated speed alterations. Build your speed to the proper level before activating cruise control. If driving on an interstate, the speed limit is generally between 55 and 70 miles per hour. This speed range is ideal for cruise control. Do not attempt to set your vehicle's cruise control at a speed that is above the legal limit. It can get you into trouble in all sorts of ways.

4) Tighten the gas cap.

When gas caps are loose, fuel evaporates. The Car Care Council notes that loose, missing or damaged gas caps contribute to the evaporation of roughly 147 million gallons of gas per year. That's both wasteful and costly. When filling up at the gas station, turn the cap until you hear it click.

Driving efficiently can make roadways safer, reduce pollution and save drivers considerable amounts of money.

5) Exercise attentiveness and common sense every time you drive.

Not much need for explanation on this one. Remember those safety practices your driver's ed teacher and parents told you when you were learning to drive? They still apply.

And if you can see what we mean, teach yourself to notice when you aren't noticing. Did you take time to notice the stop sign ... or was it a yield sign? Did the warning light on the traffic signal come on a moment ago, or several? Take notice!

How Can We Fight Against Impaired/Distracted Driving?

Some of the most festive times of the year are associated with an increased risk of automotive accidents due to impaired driving. Any time alcohol, drugs, exhaustion, distractions, and driving are mixed, the results can be unsafe driving conditions that increase the risk of injury or death.

Impaired driving

Twenty-eight people die each day in the United States in vehicular accidents that involve an alcohol-impaired driver, accounting for one death every 51 minutes, offers the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Statistics Canada points out that impaired driving remains one of the most frequent criminal offenses in Canada and is among the leading criminal causes of death. While alcohol-impaired driving has decreased over the past several decades, drug-impaired driving is on the rise.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration says alcohol and certain drugs reduce functions

of the brain and impair thinking, reasoning and muscle coordination. These are all skills that are essential to the safe operation of motor vehicles. Some of the typical effects of impairment increase proportionally to the level of blood alcohol concentration. Furthermore, interactions between alcohol and other substances in the body can increase the level of risk when driving.

Impairment laws vary by area. Blood alcohol concentration laws typically consider a blood alcohol content, or BAC, of .08 percent or above as criminal. The NHTSA says that a BAC of .08 or higher contributes to poor muscle coordination, leading to slower reaction control, decreased balance and impaired vision and hearing. Memory may be diminished and self-control and reasoning are compromised at this point as well.

Distracted driving

It is important to note that driving under the influence of illegal substances, alcohol and even prescription medications can lead to crashes. But a recent and increasingly pervasive driving problem is distracted driving. The Federal Communications Commission says the use of mobile devices behind the wheel can cause unintended and

deadly consequences. The NHTSA says that at any moment during the day, approximately 660,000 drivers use cell phones or manipulate electronic devices while driving - a figure that has remained stable since 2010.

Preventing vehicular accidents, injuries and fatalities comes down to using common sense.

• No one should text and drive.

Store phones out of reach or set "away" messages and quiet alerts while behind the wheel. If a phone must be used, pull over to a safe area to do so.

• Know the side effects of medications you are taking and how they can impair driving.

If taking a newly prescribed medication, do not operate a vehicle until you understand how it makes you feel.

• Pull over if you are feeling drowsy behind the wheel.

Opening the window or listening to loud music may not be enough to keep you awake.

• Never mix alcohol or drugs with driving.

Opt for a ride-share service or taxi if you will be having a few drinks at a bar or restaurant. Even one or two drinks can impair drivers.