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- ◆ SAVING POLINATORS
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SAFETY TIPS FOR THE SEASON



THE CHANGE IN SEASONS OFFERS A GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO SPOT-CHECK THE HOME'S VARIOUS SAFETY SYSTEMS AND COMPONENTS TO ENSURE YOUR FAMILY'S WELL-BEING.

You might have overlooked everyday wear and tear, batteries might be running low or upgrades may be needed. This potentially life-saving equipment might be needed sooner than you think.

SMOKE DETECTORS

We usually associate smoke detector maintenance with changing the batteries. But the detectors themselves should be replaced every 10 years, according to experts. Check the manufacturing date on the back of the detector to make sure yours is still within its decade-long lifespan. If you're buying new ones, consider modern smoke alarm options that also detect CO2 or synchronize through the home.

Install them in each bedroom, outside every sleeping area, and at each of the levels of your home. Test your alarms at least once a month by pressing the designated button – and replace the batteries at least once a year. An easy way to remember this is to switch them out when the clocks change each spring for Daylight Saving Time.

FIRE EXTINGUISHER

Another critical safety device that requires maintenance is a fire extinguisher. You can't just buy one and trust it will work forever. Regular inspections ensure its effectiveness. Check the pressure gauge located near the lever of your extinguisher, and look for any visible signs of damage or wear. Most high-

quality extinguishers have a lifespan of five to 15 years, but that period can differ depending on the manufacturer.

ALARMS AND LOCKS

Investing in a home security system is one of the most effective strategies for protecting your property. Many companies provide 24/7 emergency monitoring services that will notify you and the authorities if your alarm detects a potential threat. You'll have peace of mind, whether at home or away. Inspect and replace locks around your home as needed. If their basic working integrity is compromised, whether on a door or window, you may be at risk of losing valuables and jeopardizing your family's safety. Pay close attention to locks that are difficult to operate and windows that still move while locked. Both are indications that a replacement may be needed

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GET THE MOST OUT OF STORAGE

A photograph of a cluttered garage. On the left, a large black bag hangs from the ceiling. Below it, a wooden shelf holds various items, including a television and a helmet. In the center, a wooden shelving unit is stacked with cardboard boxes and colorful bags. To the right, a workbench is cluttered with tools and equipment. Bicycles are hanging from the ceiling and leaning against the workbench. The overall scene is one of a busy, storage-filled space.

Is your garage starting to overflow with household items? Simple shelving units might not be enough to accommodate it all.

Turn to innovative storage solutions like these to optimize your available space:

MAKING A PLAN

Fully customized garage storage systems are available, but it's not necessary to spend tons of money to have a more functional space. Consider exploring yard sales, classified ads or resale shops for thrifter garage storage alternatives. Those who are open to items with minor cosmetic imperfections can find quality storage solutions that are sturdy enough to support your belongings but also far more affordable.

WALL STORAGE

When floor space is at a premium, explore inventive ways to store items like bicycles, sports gear, and lawn equipment

on the walls. Hooks are a common option. A modular wall-mounted slat storage system can also provide the flexibility to fit any specific need. You can enhance the slats with wire baskets or hooks to accommodate a wide range of items, from rakes to garden hoses. Transform the interior of your garage door into valuable storage space by attaching metal brackets to securely hold lightweight sports equipment like fishing rods in a horizontal position.

VERTICAL OPTIONS

Plastic storage bins help us all organize and separate things by season, sport or family member. But they can only be stacked so high – and that setup makes it very difficult to access anything but the top bin. Construct storage towers with plywood shelving so that individual bins can be

removed and then returned after use. You can also store light-weight items in plastic storage bins up above by screwing T-shaped 2x2 pieces of wood into the ceiling and then sliding the bins in place. Take advantage of unused space in the garage by creating corner shelves in the existing studs.

SUSPENDED STORAGE

If you want to clear out space on the floor of your garage, you can also look up. Items that are infrequently used can be stored in elevated areas. If you have a ladder available, installing a fixed overhead storage shelf is an easy option. Bicycle storage systems now incorporate a rope and pulley mechanism with hooks, allowing you to securely store them overhead. A similar pulley system can be employed to lift a metal shelf for storing items in plastic bins.

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SPRUCING UP THE

OUTSIDE



Freshening up your home's exterior is a rite of passage for spring. At some point, wear and tear will dictate that your house's paint job needs to be addressed. But who should you hire? Here are a few tips on hiring the right professional painter for the job:

WHY HIRE A PRO?

This job is typically too big, and might be too dangerous, for the average homeowner to tackle. Instead, look for experienced paint companies that specialize in exterior work. (Some painters focus solely on interior projects, so save those for when you need to update your kitchen.) Before reaching out to potential painters, take some time to familiarize yourself with the exterior surfaces of your home. Browse home improvement stores and design magazines to gather inspiration for your desired aesthetic. You might even consider gathering some paint samples to help underscore the kind of colors you prefer.

EARLY EVALUATION

The cost of these exterior jobs reaches into the thousands of dollars, so conduct thorough research before you make a hire. Before inviting

painters to assess your home, look for online reviews and neighbor recommendations. Get three to five pre-estimates for any work you plan on having done, and then carefully evaluate them. View examples of their previous work on other homes.

CONSULTATIONS AND QUOTES

Reputable painters will visit a home to provide an individualized estimate. During this visit, they will inspect your paint job's current condition while identifying any architectural challenges that may affect the project. This comprehensive evaluation helps them complete a more precise quote. Present your ideas regarding colors and seek their feedback. Their recommendations might include specific products or finishes that are more suitable for your local climate.

Ask each paint contractor about their years of experience in the industry. Make sure they are properly licensed and insured, and ask about affiliations with professional associations. Pay close attention to their professional insights, but don't be persuaded into choices that aren't in line with your own budget or personal preferences. Following this discussion, the painter will provide a more detailed estimate. Review everyone's quotes, paying attention to the variations among them, before making a final decision. Ask about guarantees on their work.

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BEFORE YOU **MULCH**

EVERY THRIVING FLOWER BED STARTS WITH A SOLID FOUNDATION OF MULCH. IT PROVIDES A BIG AESTHETIC BOOST, OF COURSE, SERVING AS A SHOWCASING BACKGROUND FOR YOUR PLANTS AND SHRUBS.

More importantly, mulch also suppresses weeds, retains moisture and enhances soil quality.

THE RIGHT TIME

Apply mulch in the spring after planting your seasonal flowers and vegetables. Mulching around trees and other landscape features also enhances their visual interest. You'll be putting the perfect finishing touch to your gardening efforts. Over the next few months, mulch will act as a protective layer that keeps weeds away. Into the winter, it prevents plant displacement while shielding delicate plants from cold weather. Once the mulch has fully decomposed, it's time to refresh or completely replenish.

EXPLORE THE OPTIONS

There is a wide variety of mulch available for any type of flower bed or garden, including wood chips, bark, pine straw, rubber mulch, dyed wood, grass clippings and even newspaper. Select a type that complements the colors of your landscaping and home, and make sure it suits your local environment. If you choose dyed mulch, apply it during a period

where it won't rain for 24 to 48 hours to prevent staining nearby hard surfaces.

HANDLING MULCH

Wear gardening gloves when handling mulch to shield your hands from splinters and any dyes. Choose comfortable old clothing that you don't mind getting soiled. If you have allergies, consider wearing a face mask for added protection. Use a wheelbarrow or cart along with a shovel to transport the mulch, and lift from your knees rather than your back. To complete the job, rake the mulch to create an even layer.

MULCH CARE

If weeds begin emerging through the mulch, remove them manually or apply a weed and grass killer. Mold may develop in areas where the entire surface isn't exposed to air and light. Gently turn the mulch and evenly redistribute everything. As the mulch dries, the mold should dissipate. Exposure to sun and rain will cause your mulch to fade and break down, but that's part of its purpose to enrich the soil. Turning the mulch will also help maintain its appearance for a longer period.

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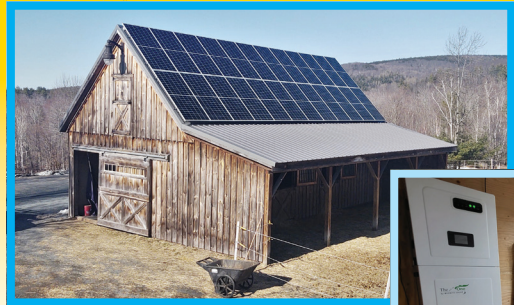
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Pollinators
play a crucial
role in bolstering
nature and food
production.



Saving Earth's **POLLINATORS**

We tend to think of bees as the only pollinators, and they are perhaps the most important single element in this important process. But butterflies, bats, birds, wasps and beetles also play a role. Unfortunately, some are under generational stress while others are actually in decline. Together, we can make a difference in saving them.

COLLAPSING COLONIES

The USDA reports that more than 100 crops rely on pollinators, with an annual economic impact in the tens of billions. Issues even with one key pollinator can have catastrophic results. For instance, the Western honey bee has been struck by colony collapse disorder. Worker bees are disappearing, leaving only the queen and a few others. The cause is likely environmental stressors, according to the USDA, including pollutants, pests, disease and

nutritional deficits. Growers, conservationists and government officials leaped into action, and the bee population began to rebound. Still, there are many others who remain at risk.

'BEE BETTER'

One of the easiest ways to support pollinators is at your local grocer, farmer's market or shopping center. Look for products that have been certified through the Bee Better program funded through the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service. Growers and manufacturers earn this certification by using pollinator-friendly practices. Buying things with the Bee Better logo helps support those who in turn support pollinators.

IN THE GARDEN

Try creating landscapes and gardens that feature native species, timing them to flower during different seasons in

order to provide a steady source of food for pollinators. Clump flowers with different shapes and colors to attract them. Those who live in areas where monarch butterflies migrate can plant milkweed, which provides food for caterpillars.

NESTING SITES

Gardeners can also provide nesting sites to encourage these populations to grow. Many prefer specific plants for their young: For hummingbirds, it's shrubs and trees. Monarchs, on the other hand, like milkweed. Bees prefer to build nests in wood, in the ground or in dry plant stems. If you decide to encourage bees by building a ground-nesting site, make sure it's facing south so the bees get the most sun and that it is well-drained. Hollow stumps make a great habitat; there are also artificial nesting sites available at retail outlets that add a nice touch to any garden.



WEATHER THE STORM

Why home standby generators play a crucial role in Vermont

By Sam Politi

The Green Mountains of Vermont and the rugged landscapes of Northern New England are renowned for their breathtaking beauty. Yet, this idyllic setting often comes with a familiar challenge: the unpredictable power of nature. From ice storms that glaze trees in a treacherous sheen to heavy snowfalls that snap power lines and fierce summer thunderstorms that unleash torrential rain and lightning, power outages are an undeniable reality of life here. While the inconvenience of a dark house and a cold cup of coffee is frustrating for most, for a significant portion of our community – particularly seniors and those reliant on medical devices – a power outage can quickly escalate from an annoyance to a life-threatening emergency. This is why owning a home standby generator is an investment in safety and well-being.

Imagine a frigid January night in Barre. The wind howls, and the temperature plummets. Suddenly, the lights go out. For a healthy individual, this means bundling up and waiting it out. However, for an elderly neighbor living alone, the loss of heat can lead to a drop in body temperature, increasing the risk of hypothermia. Their ability to call for help might be compromised if their phone relies on electricity. The simple act of navigating a dark home can become a dangerous obstacle course.

Similarly, consider a resident in Middlesex who depends on a home dialysis machine several times a week. A power outage doesn't just disrupt their routine; it halts a life-sustaining treatment. Without a reliable backup power source, they may face a critical health crisis. The same holds true for individuals using oxygen

concentrators, respirators, or other vital medical equipment. For them, electricity isn't a convenience; it's a lifeline.

The frequency and duration of power outages in Vermont and Northern New England further underscore the use of a backup power solution. Last year, the Department of Energy rated our state's grid 49th in terms of reliability. Our rural landscape often means longer response times for utility crews, especially during severe weather events when roads may be impassable. An ice storm can leave entire towns in the dark for days, isolating residents and making access to essential services difficult.

A home standby generator offers a robust and reliable solution to these challenges. Unlike portable generators that require manual setup, refueling in the harsh elements, and limited power output, a standby generator is permanently installed outside your home and connected directly to your electrical system and a fuel source, such as natural gas or propane. When the power goes out, the generator automatically kicks in, typically within seconds, ensuring an uninterrupted supply of electricity to your entire house or selected circuits.

This seamless transition provides numerous benefits:

- **Uninterrupted Heating and Cooling:** Maintaining a safe and comfortable indoor temperature during extreme weather. A standby generator ensures that furnaces and air conditioners continue to function.
- **Operation of Medical Equipment:** A standby generator offers peace of mind and, more importantly, ensures the continuous operation

of life-sustaining equipment.

- **Preservation of Food and Medications:** Refrigerators and freezers remain operational, preventing food spoilage and maintaining the efficacy of temperature-sensitive medications.
- **Lighting and Communication:** Having lights readily available enhances safety. Maintaining power also ensures that phones and internet routers remain functional, allowing for communication and access to emergency services.
- **Security Systems:** Home security systems continue to operate, providing an added layer of protection during a vulnerable time.
- **Water Supply:** If your home relies on an electric well pump, a generator ensures a continuous supply of water for drinking, sanitation, and other essential needs.

Investing in a home standby generator is an investment in security, safety, and the well-being of your family and community. While the initial cost may seem significant, it pales in comparison to the potential consequences of a prolonged power outage, especially for those most vulnerable among us.

As Vermonters and residents of Northern New England, we pride ourselves on our resilience and our ability to weather any storm. Equipping our homes with standby generators is not just about convenience; it's about taking proactive steps to protect our loved ones and ensuring that when the lights go out, we remain safe, connected, and secure.

Sam Politi is the Director of Marketing & Sales for Vermont Power Technologies d.b.d. Brook Field Service.

SPRING PRUNING TIPS

With winter receding, make smart cuts now to encourage growth.

Many perennials have foliage that provides protection during the winter, but pruning is still an essential part of their growth process. Likewise, many plants actually make stronger returns if longer branches are trimmed. Here's how to handle this essential part of spring gardening.

WHEN SHOULD I PRUNE?

The timing for pruning shrubs and trees mostly depends on when they bloom and whether those blooms are on new or old growth, according to the Farmers Almanac. Generally, plants which flower after midsummer each year should be pruned after they flower. A common worry is that over-pruning or pruning at the wrong time might kill a plant, but garden center experts say that it's rarely fatal. Instead, you'll simply have fewer blooms or less fruit.

WHAT SHOULD I PRUNE?

Fruit-bearing trees like apple, peach, plum and cherry should be pruned in early spring, as should vines like wisteria and trumpet vine. Shrubs that flower in the spring like rhododendrons and lilacs also need pruning as soon as their first blooms fade. This helps ensure a better bloom the following year. Black-eyed Susan, purple coneflower and globe thistle seed-heads provide a

terrific food source for birds, so growers are encouraged to leave them until early spring. Mums, coral bells, hostas, turtleheads and delphiniums need their protective foliage through the winter; now is the time to cut them back.

WHAT DO I USE?

Pruning tools like shears and clippers must be kept sharp in order to do their best work. Clean cuts heal quickly, eventually strengthening the plant. Botched cuts, on the other hand, actually weaken the plant while making it more susceptible to various diseases. Oil the moving parts before spring pruning to make sure everything works smoothly.

HOW TO PRUNE

Some plants require less aggressive pruning. Talk to representatives from your local extension service or gardening center to learn more about how much to prune a particular plant in your area. The Farmers Almanac is also a helpful guide. In general, focus on removing dying or dead branches, and sprouts that have emerged from the trunk. With trees and shrubs, remove all branches that are growing toward the center, downward or across other branches. Prune from the outside growth inward to get the most pleasing shape while promoting growth of stronger new branches.

HOW TO CHECK YOUR TIRES

Properly inflated tires with enough tread on them are critically important to driving safely.

Check your tires regularly, at least once a month, and before going on any long road trips. Properly inflated tires affect braking, steering and can ensure you're getting the best gas mileage.

INSPECT YOUR TIRES

Michelin says all you need to inspect your tires yourself is a penny and a few minutes. The penny should be one with Abraham Lincoln on it. Hold Abe's body between your thumb and forefinger. Choose a point on your tire where the tread appears the lowest and pop Abe's head into the groove. If any part of his head is covered by the tread, you're OK. Below that, and you need to look into a new set.

INFLATING YOUR TIRES

Part of a good tire inspection is to check your tire's pressure. You can do this with a tool or your vehicle may have a light on the dash that indicates low pressure. Refer to the owners' manual or the plate inside the glove box door,


driver's side door frame, fuel filler flap or trunk lid.

Don't go by the pressure on the tire's sidewall. That's the pressure needed to meet the tire's full-rated load capacity, not the pressure for your vehicle. Check your tire pressure before driving while the tires are still cool. If you have to check them when they are hot or after use, remember that a 2-6 psi higher reading is normal for hot tires.

Also remember that the weather can affect your car's tire pressure reading. If the light comes on, check the pressure in all four tires, especially if you've had a change in temperature recently. Keep a quality tire gauge in your car for this purpose and drive as little as possible on underinflated tires.

ROTATING YOUR TIRES


Regularly rotate your car's tires to new positions on the vehicle. Each vehicle has its own recommendations, but it's typically every 5,000 miles. It's usually done when you get your oil changed. Rotating your tires spreads wear evenly across all four tires, maximizing tread life and improving performance.



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MAINTAINING

Your Car's Paint

Paint also protects the car from rust and other damage to the frame of the vehicle. Here's how to keep it in tip-top shape.

The paint is probably the most visible part of your vehicle. Keeping it looking shiny and new is important to keeping your car looking good and to maintaining its value.

WASH YOUR CAR

Dirt and grime doesn't just look bad, it can also degrade your paint's finish. Wash your vehicle regularly. Be careful not to use a pressure jet or cleaner that's too strong and can damage the paint.

PICKING THE RIGHT WAX

Waxing can help preserve the car's finish, but using the wrong wax can actually take the paint off of a car.

Dark-colored vehicles are more prone to scratching or swirling due to wax. Make sure the wax you choose is safe for clear-coat finishes.

USE PAINT CONDITIONER

Paint conditioner adds oils to the paint, taking out fine scratches and swirls while leaving behind a glossy shine. Follow the product instructions carefully and use either a yellow wool pad or a blue or black foam pad.

PARK IN THE SHADE

Always try to leave your car in a shady spot, whether it's your garage or under a tree in a parking lot. The sun's ultraviolet rays can fade and oxidize your car's paint. If you can't park in the shade, consider using a car cover. You can get a universal car cover that's water resistant but breathable for much less than a new paint job.

FIX SCRATCHES AND DENTS

Fix scratches and dents as soon as you can, especially if you can see bare metal underneath the paint. Exposing the bare metal leaves your car vulnerable to rust, which can be exacerbated by things such as compounds used on winter roads or salty air if you live near the ocean.

USE A PAINT PROTECTION FILM

This is a thin thermoplastic urethane film that goes over the vehicle's paint, protecting it against stone chips, bugs, scratches and UV rays. Some films have self-healing properties, which can take out minor blemishes over time. A major downside is cost; PPF can run thousands of dollars, but can be well worth it for peace of mind.

Get Your Car SMELLING FRESH



After a long, mucky winter of mud and wet boots, your car may have acquired a new fragrance. Get it springtime fresh again with these few steps.

CLEAN YOUR AIR VENTS

Use a small brush or a vacuum cleaner and crevice tool to get all the dirt and debris out of your air vents.

USE BAKING SODA

Baking soda is a natural odor absorber. Sprinkle it on your upholstery and carpets, let it sit for a few hours, then vacuum it up. For tough odors, place a bowl or open box of baking soda in the car overnight.

USE AN AIR FRESHENER

Choose a scent that you enjoy and a method of deployment: spray, plug-in, vent clip, visor clip, sachet. Don't use too much and avoid fresheners with harsh chemicals.

AIR IT OUT

As soon as weather permits, open up the windows and go for a drive to circulate fresh air and get rid of musty odors.

CLEAN IT UP

Clean up any spills, especially food and drink, which tend to turn into mold. Clean the floor mats by shaking them to remove loose dirt then vacuum them and use a carpet cleaner to remove stains. Wipe down the interior with a vinegar and water spray to get rid of stubborn odors. Your car may smell like vinegar for a while, but once it dissipates, so will any other unpleasant smells.

CLEAN THE TRUNK

Don't forget to clean your car's cargo spaces, too. Remove everything, vacuum it out, and toss in a bag of charcoal to absorb odors.

CHANGE THE CABIN AIR FILTER

Many new cars have a cabin air filter. Check your owner's manual to find the instructions for replacing it and how often it should be replaced. If bad smells are plaguing your ride, you may want to change it no matter your mileage. The good news is that it's generally an easy fix that you can do yourself.

CLEAN AND CONDITION THE LEATHER

If you've got leather upholstery, you can start by cleaning and conditioning your leather. Not only will it get rid of any smelly grime, these products often come with a leathery smell that will chase off any other offensive odors.

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Caring for a **COOLING** System



Spring brings warmer temperatures not only outside but also for your car's engine. Your vehicle's coolant system distributes the engine's heat evenly throughout the car, preventing damage to the engine and other components.

Here's what you need to do to keep your car running smoothly and coolly.

CHANGE YOUR COOLANT

Change your car's coolant regularly. If it's been a while or if you mixed coolants, you may need to have a professional flush it. There are three types of coolant (also called antifreeze), each a different mix of antifreezes and anti-corrosive factors. They are typically green, blue, yellow or orange. Each mixture is meant to address the specific requirements of a certain engine; it's best to use the fluid called for in your owner's manual. That said, here's what each color means.

- **Green:** This is the traditional, inorganic acid antifreeze that was once used in all cars and is still used in cars made before about the mid 1990s. These need a change every two years or every 25,000-30,000 miles.

- **Orange:** Organic acid antifreezes don't have phosphates or silicates, but still have long-acting anti-corrosive agents that can protect the aluminum and nylon parts in newer cars. They must be replaced every three to five years and while we marked them as orange, they can be blue or other colors, depending on the manufacturer.

- **Yellow:** Hybrid organic acid antifreezes are the latest products on the market and are also called global antifreeze products. The label may say something about meeting or exceeding G-05 specifications. These fluids need to be changed every five years, and while they're usually dyed yellow, they can also be purple or pink or another color. Always read the label to ensure you're purchasing the correct product. Never mix different types of coolant.

KEEP THE RADIATOR IN GOOD ORDER

The radiator uses the car's water pump to disperse heat throughout the vehicle's system, reducing the chance of overheating. Make sure the radiator cap is on tight and check it regularly to make sure it hasn't slipped. Just make sure the engine is cool before you touch it; the cap can get hot. And stand back. Unscrewing the cap may release pressure in the system.

MAINTENANCE Schedules

While every make and model is different, here are some general rules for car maintenance, following a 30-60-90 maintenance schedule.

REGULAR MAINTENANCE

Change your oil and oil filter depending on your mileage, usually every 5,000, but maybe anywhere between every 3,000 and 10,000 miles. Check the engine oil on a regular basis, and keep an eye on your tires.

30,000 MILE MAINTENANCE

Your car shouldn't require any major repairs, but your air and fuel filters may need changing. The mechanic will probably check or change your oil and top off your fluids. Your technician should check and top off all your fluids as well as do an inspection of lights, tires and more.

60,000 MILE MAINTENANCE

This service should at least check and probably replace your battery, brakes and

Every car comes with a maintenance schedule outlined in the owner's manual. Following that timeline can keep your car running smoothly.

brake fluid, transmission fluid, coolant, brake rotors and more, along with air and fuel filters again. Your technician should check and top off all your fluids as well as do an inspection of lights, tires and more.

90,000 MILE MAINTENANCE

This is a pretty invasive service and includes the air and fuel filters as well as replacing power steering fluid, hoses, timing belts and spark plugs. Again, this will probably come with

an oil change as well as a multi-point inspection of all your vehicle's systems.

CAVEATS

While this is an example of a 30-60-90 schedule, each manufacturer has its own recommended schedule. Furthermore, how and where you drive is a huge factor in how often you need maintenance and what kind of maintenance you need.

Your best bet is to have a schedule but also to have a great relationship with a local automotive repair professional who takes a regular look at your car at least once every calendar year if they aren't handling regular oil changes and other maintenance for you.

Make sure to keep any receipts for service and warranty information so that you can look back and see when repairs and maintenance were done. This may help with a warranty repair later. Missing a service or having an incorrect service, however, may void your warranty altogether. Your dealer or auto repair professional can help you.

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CAR AIR FILTERS

Explained

Your car, just like you, needs to breathe fresh, clean air for it to work properly.

The vehicle may have two air filters, one for the engine and one for the cabin. Here's how each works.

ENGINE AIR FILTER

The engine air filter prevents your engine from being damaged by dirt and other contaminants. A clogged air filter can cause your car to misfire or have black smoke coming from the exhaust. Change your engine air filter every 30,000-45,000 miles, or more frequently if you drive in dusty or hot climates.

A clogged engine air filter may cause your check engine light to come on, and it may negatively affect your gas mileage and engine components. It may also increase pollution coming from your vehicle. If you live in an area where you must get your car emissions tested, this could cause you to fail the test.

CABIN AIR FILTER

The cabin air filter works with the air conditioning system to provide clean air to the passengers of the car. It should be changed every two or three years, generally speaking, but could be more often if you drive in dusty environments, have sensitive allergies or live in a big city.

You can tell when it's time for a change when you have problems with your air conditioner or notice strange smells.

CHANGING THE AIR FILTERS

Both engine and cabin air filters are usually pretty easy to change and it may be a job you can do yourself.

The air filter for your engine is located under the hood. You should have instructions in your owner's manual for changing the filter, but here's a general guide. Start by finding the air filter box and open it

by releasing latches or tabs. Some boxes need a screwdriver or socket set, so have one handy in case you need it. Remove the old filter and any accompanying debris. Note how it went in so that you can put the new filter in the same way.

Install the new filter matching the direction and placement of the old filter. Close the housing and secure it how it was before. You're all done.

The cabin air filter is usually behind a car's glove compartment. You may need a screwdriver to access it. Some other models have the cabin air filter under the hood. See your owner's manual for instructions.

Remove the old filter and any debris. Clean out the housing and install the new filter in the direction of the old filter.

Air flow direction is usually marked by arrows on the filter. Reinstall the glove box and close everything up.

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