

SAFETY

AND

MISCELLANEOUS

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IS YOUR PRIDE & JOY A CANDIDATE FOR A RALPH NADER WITCH HUNT? KEEPING IT SAFE I

There is a basic truism in the American mind related to automobile age and safety - that the older the car the less safe it will be. Unfortunately that is very true with the average daily driven, utilitarian use vehicle, which receives attention only when it fails to function. To some extent it is also true of our cars. Even though you try to maintain your car well, you may not even think of the old age factor creeping up on it. In many ways this should be of more concern with the car that is infrequently used than with the every day driver. For example, rubber parts such as brake seals need vibration and use. Condensation (water) is absorbed by brake fluid to a limit, then it precipitates out and settles to the bottom of the brake cylinder or caliper causing concentrated areas of rust pitting. This precipitation can not occur so easily in a car driven every day since the water is shaken about and held in suspension. Did you ever think about the fact that water gets inside your wire wheels thru the spoke holes, and that rust flakes could even now be sawing away at your inner tubes and tires?

True, state vehicle inspections are supposed to detect unsafe parts. However, they are today oriented, not forward looking. They can't detect a brake seal that has a good chance of going bad next month and don't consider those kinds of probabilities. When do you think they last checked the play in your rear wheel bearings. The answer is never - because they are used to Detroit products that don't have independent rear suspension.

Of course all of us want our TR-6 to be in top condition at all times. Obviously you don't want to loose your brakes or steering while decending the Rockies. Here is a basic checklist of things to do/have done to be reasonably confident your car is safe. However, don't consider this the sum total of things to check, I'm sure I've missed a lot. As a rule of thumb, reduce the mileage or time period by as much as 50% if the car is driven infrequently.

BRAKE FLUID: Every year, preferable in spring or fall. Bleed at each wheel until noticeably lighter color fluid appears (about 5-10 pumps). Keep topping up while bleeding with new (from a sealed can) Castrol LM. Note: Silicone not recommended for cars that set out for long periods without being driven.

BRAKE MASTER CYLINDERS, FRONT CALIPERS, AND REAR WHEEL CYLINDERS:

Rebuild every 2-5 years. Use only Girling or Lockheed kits and Castrol LM fluid. Silicone OK for daily driven cars. Check for uneven application.

CLUTCH MASTER & SLAVE CYLINDERS: Same as brakes.

STEERING RACK: Lube with 85-140 Gear Lube (not grease) every 2000 miles. See tech article for method. Check rubber boots every 2000 miles and replace if leaking. Also check that end clamps are tight. Rotate pinion gear 180 degrees if over 100,000 miles or if play at straight ahead position.

STEERING COLUMN: Replace rubber coupling every 5 years/50,000 miles. Make sure lower universal is not worn or frozen by rust. Make sure ground strap (for horn) is not frayed or broken. Check pinch bolt at lower universal is tight.

FRONT SUSPENSION: Every year/10,000 miles. Replace inner upper bushings. Check rubber boots on ball joints and tie rods. Lube all points. Every two years/20,000 miles. Replace outer lower nylon bushings and sleeves and 'O' ring seals, grease with silicone grease. Check for worn trunnions. Every five years/50,000 miles. Replace upper ball joints, tie-rod ends, inner lower bushings, shocks, sway bar hardware and rubber parts.

FRONT WHEEL BEARINGS: Every 2,000 miles. Check for play. Tighten if necessary. Always use a new cotter pin which is the correct size (5/32" as I recall) when adjusting. A correct fit is snug with no slop. Every 20,000 miles. Repack and replace seal. Every 50,000 miles. Replace wheel bearings.

REAR SUSPENSION: Every 5,000 miles. Check for worn universals (play and/or rust dust). Every 10,000 miles or yearly. Check for play in rear wheel bearings or dry bearings (rust dust around inner seal area). Rebuild universals or axle assembly if required.

TIRES: Every 2 weeks or when average daily temperature changes more than 20 degrees. Check pressure. Every 1,000 miles. Check for cuts, bumps, irregular wear, insufficient tread (replace before smooth, preferably with 10 % or more of tread left). Every 10,000 miles. Balance.

HAZARD FLASHERS: Every other day. Make sure these damn things work (they won't). Replace or repair as per the ES section.

HORN: Yearly. Remove horn button and horn brush (little plastic tube). Using cotton swab soaked in solvent such as carb cleaner, turn steering wheel back and forth while pressing swab on contact ring below steering wheel through brush hole. Also clean brush. Test to make sure you have good contact. Use of air horns is highly recommended.

LIGHTS: Every year (best in late Fall). Replace parking, stop/turn signal, and side marker bulbs, clean lenses. Check aim of headlights.

FUSE BLOCK: Every year (best in late Fall). Clean all contacts. Replace fuses. Lightly coat with silicone spray to lessen corrosion.

WIPER BLADES AND ARMS: Every year (best in late Fall). Replace blades or inserts. Replace arms if tension is insufficient.

SEAT BELTS: Every year: Check for frayed belts and inoperative reels.

EXHAUST SYSTEM: Every 5,000 miles. Check for leaks and frayed or broken hangers. Every 2 to 5 years. Replace.

DEFROSTERS: Every Fall. Check for air flow. Use a 195 degree thermostat in winter and renew it yearly.

INTERIOR: Ensure underdash and tunnel lamps work. Carry flashlight with fresh batteries (especially in winter).

TRUNK: Monthly. Check spare tire inflation. Carry flares and/ or safety triangle reflector, (also chains, container of sand, and blanket in winter).

DONT BE IN A HURRY FOR YOUR TR 6 TO FIRE UP

We are all conditioned to thinking the car that starts at the initial turn of the key is in fine condition. Essentially, that's very true. However, after your TR 6 has been setting for several hours the oil drains out of the system. On an engine with fair mileage on it you will notice a terrible clatter for a second after starting. That clatter is dry bearings beating on a dry crankshaft. I used to blame it on the oil filter draining because the filter lies horizontally and has no check valve to keep it full. The oil pump then must fill the filter before oil begins to flow to the bearings. But it appears to me the vertical spin-on filter kit from Roadster Factory doesn't improve this situation any. If the filter were the problem this set up would give instant oil pressure. The pump is probably having to prime itself too.

From now on instead of yanking out the choke and then hitting the key, leave the choke in and just let the engine spin for several seconds to start oil moving from the pump. This is especially true in cold weather when the engine probably won't fire anyhow until you choke it. I doubt that your battery will spin the engine long enough to get oil pressure on the gauge, but the longer you wait to pull that choke out the better.