

Remarkable Changes Made In Automotive Technology

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As the old adage goes, “the only constant in life is change,” and this adage certainly applies to the automotive service industry. During my 21 years in the business, I have seen remarkable changes in automotive technology and it never ceases to amaze me.

Indeed, it’s not your Father’s car anymore. Let me elaborate. Today’s cars are built to last a lot longer than ever before. A new car’s engine is a 200,000-mile power plant if it is serviced properly.

What is proper service? In the last decade, all automobile manufacturers have instituted maintenance/inspection programs, which call for 30,000-mile, 60,000-mile and 90,000-mile services. These maintenance/inspection programs were adapted from the airline industry where their success was proven in minimizing aircraft breakdowns, managing the cost of repairs, and insuring safety. Likewise, they are beneficial for cars because when cars are maintained regularly, we don’t have to worry about expensive repairs or troublesome breakdowns.

Further, with the marriage of onboard computers and fuel injection, which enables engines to run more efficiently and to last longer, the tune-up as we knew it has gone the way of the dinosaur! Your car should never need a tune-up if you are doing the required maintenance. Again, injecting another adage that rings true today, “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.”

Automobile manufacturers are now in their second generation of computers, Onboard Diagnostics 2 (OBD 2), which incidentally, are the same computers whether you drive a Lexus or a Ford. When you bring your care in for a drivability problem, such as an illuminated Check Engine light, a hesitation or stalling problem, or you are not getting optimal gas mileage, technicians diagnose these problems by using shop computers to

access the information in your car's computer. Although these diagnostic procedures have become routine for most shops, technicians with expertise in these areas are still required.

So, how does one choose a reliable repair shop? The best place to begin is by looking for a shop where a AAA sign is displayed. The AAA designation assures that all repairs are AAA-approved and guaranteed. To become a AAA-approved repair facility, a shop must satisfy a rigorous set of standards and nationwide only 5 percent of shops qualify.

Qualified technicians are also a must. Look for another sign ASE, which stands for Automotive Service Excellence, and indicates that the technicians are certified to do the repair work.

Safe, happy motoring!

Dave Carney