

More Women Now Responsible For Vehicle Maintenance

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Here are some windshield safety tips you should know

Think automobiles are the sole domain of males? Think again.



The windshield is a critical part of a vehicle's safety system. It allows the passenger-side airbag to function properly and, in the event of an accident involving a rollover, it helps to minimize roof collapse.

Photo courtesy of PPG PROSTARS.

A 2004 study by the Automotive Aftermarket Industry Association showed that 9 out of 10 female motorists are at least somewhat involved in the decision-making process for their household's vehicle maintenance and repair. Of those women, more than two-thirds (68 percent) always take their vehicle in for service themselves.

"Because women are increasingly more involved in car care, they need to be aware of something that's often overlooked—or rather looked right through—by female and male motorists alike," said Jeff Blum, director PPG Automotive Aftermarket Alliance, including PPG PROSTARS Certified Auto Glass Technicians, "and that's windshield safety."

In addition to shielding occupants from wind, a vehicle's windshield allows the passenger-side airbag to function properly and, in the event of an accident involving a rollover, it helps to minimize roof collapse.

This is of particular concern considering the increasing amount of time women—"taxi moms" in particular—are spending in the car. This trend can be seen dramatically when comparing two studies conducted by the Surface Transportation Policy Project, a nonprofit advocacy group in Washington, D.C. The 2001 study showed the average mother of school-age children spent an average of 74 minutes a day driving, up from 67 minutes in 1995.

There are several factors about the specialty nature of windshield glass of which women should be aware. For instance, a windshield actually consists of two pieces of glass, bonded together by a vinyl inter-layer. If a windshield breaks during impact, the broken pieces will generally adhere to the plastic lining.

"Women should also be aware that not all damage requires a windshield replacement," said Blum. "Windshield repair is an option for some types of damage and will restore the structural integrity of the windshield's glass." For many car owners with comprehensive insurance coverage, the insurance company will often waive the deductible for a windshield repair, he said.

Other factors car owners should be aware of regarding windshield safety involve weather and safe drive away time.

"The windshield is secured to a vehicle by a strong adhesive system," said Blum. "If weather conditions do not cooperate for installing a replacement windshield outdoors, or perhaps through a mobile-only repair service, or if the time is cut short for an adhesive to cure properly, it could put the driver of the vehicle and any occupants at risk."

Blum advises all car owners to make sure they select or request an auto glass technician who is experienced and certified; one that follows the proper installation steps (see sidebar) both before and after any windshield work has been performed.

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Six basic categories of proper windshield replacement

Pre-work includes pre-inspection and protecting vulnerable areas from damage during the replacement.

Parts removal includes removal of molding, wipers, cowl and trim. Glass installers sometimes bend the cowl back rather than remove it to save time. This results in a poor set of the new windshield.

Pinchweld preparation includes trimming the old urethane evenly to 1/16 of an inch. This takes time but ensures a quality fit and bond of the new windshield.

Proper urethane application requires selection and use of primers and urethane systems that fit the existing weather conditions, and time that the vehicle will be out of operation. It is a good idea to ask glass shops to provide documentation of training that their technicians have received in urethane adhesives, and auto glass replacement.

Glass replacement can sometimes require two technicians of larger windshields to make sure the windshield is set properly on the first try. There is no room for error when setting the windshield. Poor initial placement almost always leads to compromises in installation quality.

Post-work includes providing clear instructions on safe drive-away time. Different adhesive systems have significantly different cure time characteristics. It is a good idea to ask ahead of time how long the vehicle must remain out of operation.



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