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SUMMER ROAD TRIPS: TURNKEY TIPS FOR PROTECTING YOUR VEHICLE

Packing up the car or RV for beach outings, reunions and theme park adventures is an annual summertime tradition for a lot of American families. According to a recent [AAA survey](#), road trips are the most popular mode of vacation for families planning to travel this year, ahead of taking a cruise and visiting an international location.

With all of the miles drivers stand to put on the odometer this summer, having a vehicle protection plan for the family car may be just the thing to keep them from being stuck on the side of the road.

Not to be confused with extended warranty plans, which are only offered by car manufacturers, vehicle protection plans act as additional or alternative protection to a manufacturer's warranty. Though it will not cover cosmetic damage such as dents and scratches, a vehicle protection plan can provide coverage for repairs involving the engine, suspension, transmission and other mechanical issues.

“Whether the destination is 25 or 500 miles away, extended car rides during warm weather months can put additional wear and tear on any car,” said John Laudenslager, senior vice president of global product management for [Vehicle Protection Services](#), a business of Assurant. “A vehicle protection plan can cover the cost of an unexpected mechanical failure - with most providing roadside assistance and car rental services – so travelers won’t be completely derailed by a break down and can continue their trip worry-free.”

For drivers starting to prep their vehicles for summer getaways with the hope of preventing mechanical problems on the road, the [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration](#) has put together a vehicle safety checklist that provides pre-trip maintenance tips, such as:

- Check the pressure in each car tire – including the spare – at least once a month. Also look for irregular tread wear. The tires may need to be rotated or new tires may have to be purchased.
- Have the cooling system serviced. Overheating engines are common in hot weather, so it’s important to make sure the cooling system is functioning properly.
- Top off all fluids. Engine oil, radiator coolant or windshield wiper and transmission fluids are all vital to the overall health of the vehicle. Some fluid levels can be easily checked by the driver. Others, like brake and transmission fluids, should be evaluated by a professional, especially if there is a leak.
- Test all lights, including headlights, brake lights, turn signals, emergency lights and interior lights and have blown bulbs replaced.
- Keep everyone cool – especially seniors and children. If the air conditioning unit is blowing hot air, have it serviced as soon as possible.

However, even the best laid plans can come undone. Car accidents and break downs can seriously disrupt road trips, causing injury and stranding travelers in unfamiliar locations. The [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration](#) suggests having a few items on hand in case of an emergency, including a cell phone, first aid kit, jumper cables, tire jack and tool kit.

With a mapped-out route, emergency supplies, a well-maintained car and the peace-of-mind of a vehicle protection plan, summer highway travelers can navigate and survive any bump in the road.