



When versatility is a big factor, vans are often the buyers choice.

Van, RV goodies' market is booming

Van and recreational vehicle (RV) products are the biggest selling items in the automotive industry since the advent of citizen's band radios.

This was the consensus among automotive marketing specialists at a recent van and RV seminar sponsored by the Automotive Parts & Accessories Association.

The APAA panelists projected 1978 van and RV sales about 20 per cent over 1977. The current annual growth pattern is expected to continue into the 1980s.

"Because of its multi-use capacity, the van is expected to become more attractive to a larger number of consumers," the panelists agreed, "especially when such factors as the shorter work week and more three-day weekends have a greater impact on American life.

"Such other factors as the energy shortage and continued inflation will most likely reaffirm the movement toward functional vehicles with the efficiency and versatility of vans."

The percentage of vans purchased for personal use is rising; presently it is almost 60 per cent of all vans sold, APAA reports.

Based on manufacturers' projections of 800,000 units for 1978, personal vans should reach 480,000 if the current commercial/personal ratio holds up.

APAA estimates 1.4 million of the 2.5 million vans on the road are personal vehicles. APAA sees mini-vans as the station wagons of the future.

Mushrooming van and RV production is expected to have a positive impact on the \$34.5 billion automotive aftermarket which currently is growing at an annual rate of nearly 10 per cent.

Among the more popular van accessories appearing in volume automotive retail outlets are seat belts, shock absorbers, wheels, tires, trailer hitches, snack trays, air filters, burglar alarm systems, clearance lights, reflectors, spotlights and truck mirrors.

Stay cool when it's hot, check belts and hoses

A "do-it-yourself" check of your car's engine cooling system and air conditioner may help you avoid a costly breakdown or a spoiled vacation trip in the hot summer weeks ahead.

The following cooling system check is always a good idea:

•Hoses—Squeeze radiator and heater hoses for soft or brittle spots that indicate a need for replacement. White or rust-colored stains near hose clamps or elsewhere on the hose usually point to a loose connection or leak.

•Belts—Inspect fan and other drive belts for wear and tension. Belts that are worn, frayed or damaged should be replaced. Belts should give less than one-half inch under pressure from your thumb. If you're in doubt, ask your mechanic to check the belt with a tension gauge.

•Radiator—Examine the surface of your car's radiator for dents or damage that might require repair. Also, make certain the radiator pressure cap locks firmly in place. If the spring on the pressure cap seems loose or weak, the cap may have to be replaced. It's best to remove the radiator cap with the engine "cold." (Use extreme caution whenever attempting to remove a pressure cap while the engine is still hot.)

•Coolant—The anti-freeze and water solution in your radiator should reach to within two or three inches of the radiator's filler neck or to the cold-fill mark on the side of the radiator. If coolant is dirty or rusty, the system should be flushed and refilled with fresh solution. If the system requires frequent amounts of additional water, a more thorough check by a service technician is advisable.

Air conditioning problems are more difficult to pinpoint, most service experts note. However, a noticeable drop in cooling efficiency is a common sign that professional service may be needed.

Although the majority of new cars are sold with air conditioning, few car owners realize that auto air conditioners should be checked periodically by a trained mechanic. Items that require attention include the air conditioner's compressor drive belt, refrigerant level, and attaching bolts and brackets.

If you are on summer vacation and your car is overloaded, or you are pulling a heavy trailer, your engine may overheat. To avoid overheating when caught in slow or stop-and-go traffic, avoid prolonged idling with the automatic transmission in the drive position.

Things may get a bit hot, but turning on your car's heater with the blower at full speed may help as a last resort to bring down the temperature of an overheated engine long enough to reach a phone or service garage.

The heater serves as a "mini-radiator" to siphon heat away from the engine block. If your car's temperature gauge continues to climb or the warning light remains on, however, you should pull over to the side of the road and wait for help.

If your car seems to need a little more gas these days, maybe you need fresh Champion spark plugs.

What do plugs have to do with mileage?

Quite a bit. A spark plug is what starts the gasoline burning in your car's engine. The better the burn, the better your mileage. Or to state it another way, if your plugs are worn or fouled, they will be wasting gasoline every time they fail to fire. Before long, your car is using more gas than it should. And you get to pay.

How can you tell when it's time for fresh plugs?

Plug wear is a slow, steady process. So there's no drastic jump in gas consumption to give you the word. However, we have found that motorists can be money ahead by changing their spark plugs once a year.

So fill 'er up with Champions.

They've won more races than any other brand. They're made just right for your car. They're the world's No. 1 selling spark plug. Besides, they paid for this message to help you save money. And fair is fair.

CHAMPION
You can't buy a better plug.

