CARBON MONOXIDE KILLS!!

The effects of carbon monoxide are so subtle that passengers in the back seat of a car have been known to go to sleep and die while the persons in the front seat were unaffected.

Carbon monoxide can enter a car in many ways. It may accumulate in the engine compartment and seep through a chink in the firewall into the front seat area. It may escape from a leaky muffler and find a hole in the floor. Or it may accumulate in the trunk space and enter from behind the back seat.

In any case, it is a deadly enemy and can only be defeated by a flawless exhaust system.

One further observation about carbon monoxide. In a moving car, there's a chance that gases leaking from the exhaust system will blow away before entering the car. A parked car with the engine running stands a much better chance of accumulating a lethal quantity of the gas.

Therefore -- NEVER SIT IN A PARKED CAR WITH THE ENGINE RUNNING! You may not get out alive. And it can happen in a late model car as well as a clunker.

This should especially be noted by frequenters of Lovers' Lane. Across the nation, scores of young persons perish each year because they left the engine running to warm the heater while they exchanged sweet nothings.

Another victim of summer driving may be your radiator. If you have done any high - altitude driving, or if your car overheats, you probably added water. This has the effect of diluting your anti - freeze. Your radiator may have been good for 20 below last winter, but dilution could raise its level of safety to, say, 5 below.

Of course, the simple way to combat this threat is merely to have your radiator checked at a service station. It is far more comfortable to do it now than to wait until the first cold snap of the winter, when the ramp of every service station in town is crowded with cars.

A further consideration for a properly operating cooling system is the thermostat. If your car ran at cool temperatures during the summer, it will run even cooler in winter. This means that you may not get the best from your heater. It also means that you won't get the gas mileage that you should. A cool engine is inefficient and wastes gas.

If you have doubts about your thermostat consult the dealership where you bought the car or a reliable service station.

These are the major hangovers from summer driving. Once they are taken care of, you can tackle the new problems that will confront your car during the wintry months ahead.

If you expect to trade the car within a year, there is no point in buying a battery with a 36 - month warranty.

The biggest favor you can do your battery is to get your car a tune - up. October is regarded by experts as the best time because it represents a neutral point between the seasons.

The importance of a tune - up was dramatically illustrated a few years ago in a study made by one of the large spark plug manufacturers. Fifty thousand cars in Canada and the U.S. were included in the study.

The results were startling. In Quebec, where winters are severe, the researchers found the lowest rate of starting difficulties.

In the southcentral part of the U.S., they found the highest rate among the nine U.S. and five Canadian regions in the study. In the southcentral area -- Texas, Louisiana and part of Oklahoma and Arkansas -- nearly one - fourth of the motorists in the study had experienced starting troubles.

Why the difference? Because the number of tune - ups was exactly opposite the number of starting failures. In other words, the Quebec residents, who had the least starting troubles had the greatest percentage of tune - ups. And the southcentral residents who had the most starting failures had the fewest tune - ups.

The lesson is clear. A tune - up in the autumn is the best preventive maintainance for avoiding starting failure in the winter ahead.

Another finding of the study was that the battery most often is blamed by the motorist, but in most cases it is other parts of the ignition system that are actually at fault. Another argument in favor of the tune - up: The battery can't do its job if the power is being dissipated through faulty wires, points and plugs.