

On the road

Plan for safety when preparing for vacation

The car is loaded to the gills with everything but grandma's china, and you and your spouse are busy cross-examining each other about having enough money for the trip, whether the basement door was locked, and if the paperboy was given the word to stop delivery.

The kids are arguing over who gets to sit by a window and sleeping on each other's toes to put the first scuff marks on their new sneakers. But eventually everything is as ready as it ever will be, and you back down the driveway and set a course for the vacation that seemed like it would never come. But in the excitement to get away from it all, some people forget that there are important differences between local driving and vacation driving. Trips around town are not the same as driving long distances on interstate highways in parts of the country that are not familiar to you, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration says.

Your vacation shouldn't begin until you have first prepared your car for the trip. Start your preparations at least a couple of weeks before you plan to leave. Preparing your car or van is as important as preparing yourself.

If your trip is to be a long one, make sure the engine is properly tuned. This initial expense can save you big dollars and hassles on the road. Vehicles in top running shape are not likely to break down in places where mechanics aren't nearby. A tuneup before you leave can also improve performance and fuel economy.

There's some extra equipment you might want to take along for emergencies. Included are a tool kit, flares, flashlight and extra batteries, an extra quart of motor oil, a five-gallon empty gasoline can, replacement drive belts and a container of fresh water for the radiator.

Test the brakes to see if they need adjusting. Change the oil and air filters if necessary. Radiators and coolant, drive belts, wiper blades, heating and air conditioning systems, as well as the exhaust system, should all be inspected and serviced as necessary.

Be sure to check the tires for tread and pressure. Badly worn tires are dangerous and should be replaced. With the family, plus luggage and other equipment, your car and tires may be loaded

to capacity. Inflate your tires to the maximum inflation pressure recommended by the vehicle manufacturer.

You can find a tire inflation information placard or sticker on the car door post or inside the glove compartment door, or check your owner's manual. Don't forget to check the pressure of your spare tire in case you need it.

FOR THE TRIP itself — wear your seat belts. They will also give you peace of mind knowing that you are giving yourself and your family the best protection available in the event of a crash or sudden high speed stop.

Small children should be properly buckled into a safety seat. Forty-six states now have laws requiring them for children under certain ages, and chances are that you will pass through one or more of these states.

Second, keep in mind that speed limits should be carefully observed for both highway and city driving.

Take time to plan the day's travel and repeat the process every night during the trip. Choose a set number of miles or hours to travel and plan to stop on schedule to prevent fatigue. Experts agree that six hours a day or 300 miles — whichever comes first — is a reasonable day's drive. After that, reflexes and alertness diminish significantly.

Plan to stop frequently to rest. You'll help prevent highway hypnosis, that drowsy feeling that most of us have experienced behind the wheel at one time or another. As mile turns into endless mile on a turnpike, your mind tends to go to sleep. It's difficult to fight off this lulling of your senses, and periodic stops are the best antidote.

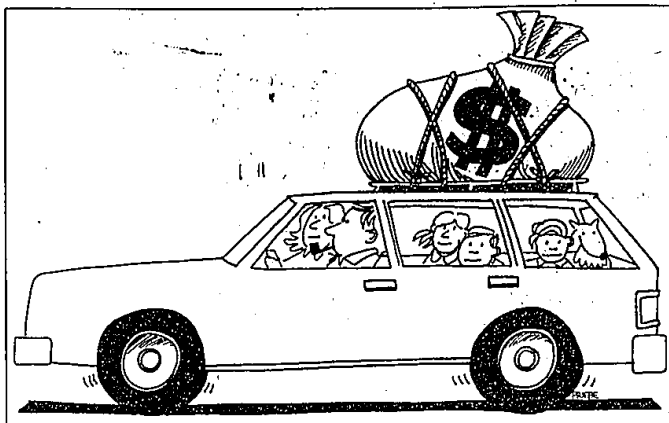
Flat tires are a nuisance, but they happen to everyone sooner or later. If you have a puncture or a blowout, pull off the road completely to change it — the further off the road the better. At night, put flares out at least 100 feet behind your car and turn on your emergency flashers. If there is not enough room to park safely on the shoulder, drive slowly to the closest safe area out of traffic. This may ruin the flat tire, but your safety is worth the price.

A few other tips to cover special situations should be mentioned. Driving in

extreme hot weather calls for special precautions. Carry extra water in canteens for your family and your car. Make sure the radiator and battery are full, and watch the temperature gauge on the dashboard carefully. It's often the first sign of impending trouble. And don't take a chance on running out of gas. Especially if you are in rural or remote areas, keep a fuel reserve of about 100 miles — that could be as much as half a tank on some cars. Top off the tank frequently rather than driving until the tank is almost empty before refueling.

Another item on this checklist of safety tips for summer travelers is to avoid burns to children. On hot summer days, sunlight passing through the windows of a closed car can heat metal parts such as safety belt buckles and vinyl seats sufficiently to cause discomfort, burning, or even blistering of the exposed skin of an infant or young child. When the outside temperature is 79 degrees, sunlight can heat the vinyl seat in a closed car to 192 degrees. The best way to protect children from such burns is to test the temperature of a seat before putting your child on it. Better yet, cover the car seats or child safety seats with a light colored blanket or towel. Try to acquire the habit of looking for a shady spot to park your car when you stop.

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Have no reservations about airline services

The traveler who requires a salt-free diet, the musician who travels with an instrument and the wheelchair-bound person are some of the passengers who can receive special services from most airlines.

"While many airlines provide extra services to make trips more enjoyable, passengers usually must request these courtesies in advance," says Charles Lentz, Auto Club of Michigan travel sales and promotions manager.

Travelers can check with their travel agent or airline for arrangements regarding meals, seating and other special benefits. "Most major airlines serving food also offer a variety of special meals," Lentz adds.

Optional meals commonly available include salt-free, vegetarian, low-cholesterol and low-calorie foods and meals for diabetics. Special children's meals often are available.

Passengers wanting to arrange a special meal should order it when making flight reservations or purchasing tickets. They should confirm with their travel agent or airline 24 hours before take-off to be sure that the computer has logged the order.

IN ADDITION to arranging convenient seating for handicapped or elderly passengers, airlines will "pre-board" such passengers prior to others to ensure maximum comfort.

For someone needing a wheelchair,

reservations personnel can order one at both the point of departure and the point of destination. A passenger's personal wheelchair will be checked free with luggage.

Seeing Eye dogs and guide dogs for the deaf are permitted on board with their owners free of charge.

Musicians can use an option offered by most major airlines. For example, a bass player may purchase the seat next to his own for his bass at half price. Large people sometimes buy the second seat at half price for more comfort.

AIRLINES MAKE special provisions for children unaccompanied by adults. Generally, children ages 5 through 7 years may travel on one carrier. Those 8 and older can be booked for travel involving transfers to more than one airline. Those planning a trip for a child should contact their travel agent or airline for specific information.

For a young traveler, an airline places in its computer the child's age, name, and telephone number of the party bringing him or her to the airport. The same information is entered for those meeting the child at his or her destination.

Flight attendants are instructed to turn any minor children traveling alone over to an airline representative at the destination point. That representative is responsible for seeing that

the child is released only to the proper person.

Most airlines provide these services automatically for all children ages 5 to 11. Similar services are provided on request only for those 12 through 15.

AN ANIMAL can be checked as baggage if it is in an approved container. A limited number of household pets are allowed to accompany their owners in the passenger cabin.

Pets must be small enough to fit into a carry-on "pet liner" that can be placed under the seat in front of the owner. The pet must remain in the container throughout the flight.

Airlines will check two pieces of luggage, one large and one medium-sized, for each passenger. A third piece can be checked free or be carried on if it is small enough to fit under the seat.

AIRLINES ALSO handle golf clubs, bicycles, surfboards, skis, fishing rods and other types of sporting gear. Since charges vary by item and special boxes are available for certain items, passengers should check in advance for specific information about transporting equipment.

"Passengers should remember that a domestic airline's maximum liability for baggage is \$750 per ticketed passenger," adds Lentz. "Excess valuation" insurance can be purchased for an additional price."

PARENTAL GUIDANCE.

Tell your parents about the security of Direct Deposit. It's the kind of guidance they'll appreciate, and it's a nice way to let them know you care. With Direct Deposit, their Social Security goes straight to their checking or savings account. They don't have to wait for the check or worry about it.

Have them ask for it where they now deposit their Government checks. It's free. And after all, they've got it coming.

DIRECT DEPOSIT

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