

2010 National Car Care Month Check Lanes Show 72 Percent Failure Rate

Vehicle inspection lanes, conducted throughout the United States by sponsoring local organizations and businesses, are part of the automotive aftermarket industry's ongoing public awareness campaign.

Volunteers across the country conduct these events, with a portion of them returning their vehicle inspection forms to the Car Care Council for tabulation and analysis. The April 2010 campaign included results from a total of 608 vehicle inspections.

Statistics from the latest National Car Care Month inspection campaigns continue to underscore the need for consumer education. The potential effects on highway safety, air quality, cost of operation, vehicle performance and vehicle dependability are self-evident from these results.

The vehicle failure rate for at least one part or system in April 2010 was 72 percent. This means that seven out of every ten vehicles failed at least one component of the vehicle inspection process.

OVERALL VEHICLE FAILURE RATES (April + October)	
Year	Rate
2001	72%
2002	91%
2003	90%
2004	87%
2005	85%
2006	88%
2007	80%
2008	80%
2009	80%
2010	72% (Only April)

LUBRICANTS AND FLUIDS

Lubricants and Fluids		
	2009	2010
Engine Oil	27%	26%
Brake Fluid	13%	24%
Transmission Fluid	21%	23%
Coolant	26%	19%
Power Steering Fluid	17%	17%
Washer Fluid	17%	12%

Low fluid levels can affect the safe driving performance of the vehicle and damage internal parts if not properly maintained. Approximately one out of four vehicles (26 percent) failed the inspection because of low, overfull or dirty engine oil.

Approximately one-fourth of the vehicles inspected had brake fluid (24 percent) or transmission fluid (23 percent) which were not the right level or condition.

The cooling system protects against damage by keeping the engine operating within the correct temperature range. Approximately one-fifth of the vehicles inspected (19 percent) had low, leaky or dirty coolant in their radiator or surge tank.

Seventeen percent of vehicles had problems with their power steering and twelve with their fluid washer fluid.

WINDSHIELD WIPERS

Windshield Wipers		
	2009	2010
Windshield Wipers	39% *	15%
Rear Wiper	9%	11%

* 2009 failure rate abnormally high as compared to historic years.

Fifteen percent had front windshield wiper failures while eleven percent of vehicles also needed service on their rear wipers.

PARTS

Parts		
	2009	2010
PARTS		
Belts	51% *	11%
Hoses	10%	11%
OTHER UNDERHOOD		
Air Filter	15%	13%
Check Engine Light	10%	11%
PCV Filter	4%	3%
Radiator Cooling Fan(s)	4%	1%
GENERAL ITEMS		
Mirrors	2%	2%
Horn	2%	2%

* 2009 failure rate abnormally high as compared to historic years.

Roadside breakdowns can be avoided by motorists periodically checking their belts and hoses and replacing them when worn. One out of every ten (11 percent) belts and hoses was reported as unsatisfactory in the vehicles inspected.

The air filter keeps abrasive dust, dirt, bugs and other foreign matter out of the fuel system air intake. A dirty filter can decrease gas mileage and increase emissions. Thirteen percent of the vehicles checked needed new air filters. One-tenth of the vehicles inspected had their check engine light on. In addition, three percent of vehicles were in need of new PCV filters and one percent had a mechanical or electrical issue with their radiator cooling fans.

An additional two percent had problems with their left, right or inside mirror and two percent with their horn.

BATTERY

Battery		
	2009	2010
Cables, Clamps or Terminals	13%	10%
Carrier/Hold-Down	10%	7%

Battery cables, clamps and terminals were found to need maintenance on ten percent of the vehicles inspected, while seven percent of the batteries were not properly held down.

TIRES

Tires		
	2009	2010
Tire Pressure	15%	8%
Tire Depth	9%	13%

Low tire pressure decreases gas mileage and tire life. Vehicles traveling with worn tread are at greater risk of losing traction on wet or snowy roads. Eight percent of the vehicles were found to have improperly inflated tires and thirteen percent had worn tread and were in need of replacement.

LIGHTS/VISION

Lights/Vision		
	2009	2010
License Plate Lights	15%	11%
Brake Lights	14%	8%
Side Markers	7%	3%
Turn Signals	5%	3%
Dash Indicator Lights/Gauges	2%	3%
Headlights	3%	3%
Backup Lights	4%	2%
Parking/Tail Lights	4%	2%

Vehicle lighting provides a means of communicating among drivers and is vital to any properly functioning vehicle. Approximately one out of every ten vehicles (11 percent) needed work on at least one of their license plate lights while eight percent failed on their left, right or center brake lights. Three percent failed due to side markers, turn signals, dash indicator lights and headlights while two percent failed due to backup lights and parking lights.