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# Car Repair Basics

by Carla Roberts

The more you notice about your vehicle, the more likely you'll be able to head off repair problems. Yep- even if you're mechanically challenged. You can detect many common vehicle problems by using your eyes and nose.

"See No Evil"

Is there a little stain or a drop of fluid under your vehicle? It may mean absolutely nothing. But you do want to check the wet spots immediately - just to make sure.

What color is the fluid under your car? Yellowish green, pretty blue or neon orange colors indicate an overheated engine or an antifreeze leak caused by a bad hose, water pump or leaking radiator. Not good. I remember the yellowish green ooze from my Chevette as the tow truck took it away to its final resting place. Get to a repair shop while you still can!

A dark brown or black oily fluid means the engine is leaking oil. A bad seal or gasket could cause the leak. This is how my first car met its demise.

A red oily looking spot indicates a transmission or power-steering fluid leak. Also, not good.

A puddle of clear water usually isn't a cause for concern. It may be normal condensation from your vehicle's air conditioner. Whew!

"Smell no Evil"

Take a whiff, and you may detect your vehicle's problem. Do you smell burned toast? This odor often signals an electrical short and burning insulation. Have someone come look at your car. Don't drive it anywhere until the problem is diagnosed.

How about the smell of rotten eggs? This usually indicates a problem in the catalytic converter. Get to a repair shop! Pheee-yew!

A thick sharp odor usually means burning oil. Look for the sign of a leak. This problem needs to be addressed immediately if having transportation is important to you. You may also notice a bluish smoke coming from your vehicle. Ask me how I know. Ahh memories.

The smell of gas after a failed start may mean the engine is flooded. Wait a few minutes and try again. If the odor continues, there may be a leak in the fuel system - a potentially dangerous problem that needs immediate attention.

A chemical odor may mean overheated brakes or clutch. Check the parking brake. Stop and let the brakes cool after repeated hard braking. Light smoke coming from a wheel indicates a stuck brake. Call a tow truck.

Do you notice a sweet odor? This may indicate a coolant leak. Watch your temperature gauge and warning light and drive to a repair shop. Now, if you see steam from under the hood, stop and pull over. If you keep driving an overheated vehicle, your engine will be seriously damaged. Call a tow truck.

The basic rule of smell is that if you do notice an unusual odor - get to a mechanic or get one to come to you. Pretty simple!

A little extra attention to what's coming out of your car or truck could save you the cost of a new vehicle payment! Keep those eyes and that nose on the job!

About the Author:

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