Headline: Not all fluid flushes are created equal

Deckhead: Avoid add-ons during vehicle’s routine maintenance

The rising cost of new vehicles have kept more late models on our highways. Automotive technology has them requiring less maintenance and fewer repairs, lessening the pain on consumers’ wallets.

But improved technology shouldn’t be an excuse for not having your vehicle regularly maintained. Preventive maintenance keeps our vehicles running smoothly. It’s smart and vital but don’t let a shop fool you into purchasing something you might not need.

Car owners often are offered additional fluid and flush products and services when taking in their vehicles for an oil change. These could include automatic transmission, coolant and brake-system fluid exchanges or flushes.

All are legitimate maintenance items but be aware that they could be offered at intervals more frequent than recommended by the manufacturer. The California Bureau of Automotive Repair coined the term “wallet flush” for services that regularly provide little to no benefit to the vehicle but are primarily performed to boost the revenue of a repair shop.

Services like air-conditioning evacuation and recharge don’t need to be routinely addressed. And others like power-steering fluid changes and fuel-injector and fuel-system cleaning might not be recommended at all. AAA research found that using a fuel that meets top-tier standards keeps engines as much as 19 times cleaner.

AAA recommends these maintenance mainstays:

* Your owner’s manual was written by people who built your vehicle. It contains the most accurate information about how to care for it. Take the time to read it to understand manufacturer-recommended services, and when they are due. Some services might not be recommended and could void your warranty.
* On-board maintenance reminders are accurate, making the 3,000-mile oil change largely a thing of the past. Following the reminder’s oil change intervals is sufficient to maintain the new-car warranty.
* Repair shops that display the AAA Approved Auto Repair sign can be trusted.

AAA Members are entitled the following benefits at AAR shops:

* All repairs, parts, labor and components are guaranteed for 24 months or 24,000 miles under normal-operating conditions.
* Priority service with Roadside Assistance to a AAA Approved Auto Repair facility with prompt vehicle evaluation within 60 minutes of AAA tow arrival and assistance in obtaining alternate transportation.
* Enjoy a 10% discount (up to $50) upon member request on regularly priced parts and labor through the AAA Discount and Rewards® program.
* You will be provided a written estimate of the cost of all work to be performed on your vehicle. The final cost may not exceed the estimate by more than 10% unless authorized by you in advance.
* The return of replaced parts if requested.
* Should a AAA member be unsatisfied with the service or repairs received at a AAA Approved Auto Repair facility, the facility has agreed to accept the decision instructed by AAA in order to correct the member’s concern.

Preventive maintenance is money well spent – as long as you’re not paying for something you don’t need.

Cutline: FLUID MOVEMENT – Having your vehicle’s oil changed regularly is vital to keeping it running smoothly. Image: romaset. Adobe Stock.

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Scan QR code to learn more about AAA’s Approved Auto Repair shops.