

SCHEDULED SERVICE TIPS



Ralph Seekins

Question: It's always such a hassle to get the scheduled service done on my car. How important is it and is there a right way and a wrong way to get it done?

Answer: I know it's a hassle, but you really do need to have your vehicle properly serviced if you want it to run good and last long. And, just as important, you need to keep good records of what was done and when.

There are three primary options for all owners: do it yourself; have it done at an independent shop; or, take it to a dealership representing your vehicle's manufacturer.

I remember my dad buying oil by the 55 gallon drum and filters and grease by the case. He was a civil engineer raised on a family farm and believed, from experience, that frequent maintenance reduced expense and down time. He made sure I learned early how to do almost all scheduled maintenance. I also learned to write down what I did and when I did it in the service log. Dad's cars and trucks routinely went well over 150,000 miles without major failures.

When I left home, in the mid 60's, I didn't have a garage and didn't have the tools needed to service my vehicles myself. So I took them to a small independent garage a couple blocks down the street. I knew the owner. However, I provided my own filters because I didn't like the brand he sold – a carry-over from my dad's use of nothing but original manufacturer equipment. And, as I had learned early in life, I kept a file of what was done and when.

Later, I started working in a small repair shop where I could do my own service after work at night or on Saturday. Eventually, as vehicles became more complex and because I was now working in sales at a new vehicle dealership (1970), I had all my service work done there where I knew everything that went into or onto my vehicle was original manufacturer's equipment and the recommended services were performed according to their requirements. Yet, I still kept my own records of what was done when and made sure that I followed or exceeded the recommended service intervals.

I have gone through my own history to point out that you have similar options. However, a little preparation on your part and keeping good records can save both time and money.

First, find the Factory Owners Manual and Scheduled Maintenance Guide for your vehicle. If you can't find it, you may

be able to download it on line. For example, if a Ford or Lincoln-Mercury owner wants to locate their Scheduled Maintenance Guide, he or she can do so by simply Googling "Ford Owners Manuals." Click on "Ford Fleet – Maintenance – Owner Manuals." By following the instructions, you can download manuals from 1996 forward. Most other manufacturers have similar sites.

Once you have obtained the appropriate Guide, at the very minimum, follow its recommendations for severe operating conditions because of our Interior Alaska environment. The manual was written by the people who designed and built your vehicle and want you to have a good experience with it. And, this is very important, if you have a vehicle covered by warranty or a service contract, not following the guide can invalidate coverage. So keep good records of what was done and when.

As with all things automotive, if you have questions as to how to best equip or properly operate your vehicle in sub-arctic and arctic environments, it is in your best interest to consult with the local dealer franchised to sell your brand of vehicle.

Ralph Seekins has more than 42 years' experience in the automotive industry. He started as a mechanic, worked in sales, and for the past 35 years, has been the owner of Seekins Ford Lincoln.