

Summer maintenance

A roundup of essentials for keeping customers' vehicles safe and performing well in summer

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Summer's when the wear-and-tear on all the components of the vehicles you service shows up after the long winter season. Of course the weather plays a huge role in how you attack a summer maintenance program and it's not all about the heat.

The Farmer's Almanac predicts showers and thunderstorms, gusty winds and lots of rain for June and July. That means you'll need to be up on what's needed to keep your customer's windshield wipers working well when the summer skies open up.

THREE WIPER BLADE TYPES

There's a push on to develop a generic blade that works well in both winter and summers conditions. But there are still basically three types to select from according to Paul Smith, the product manager for Bosch Canada, North American Division. He says there's a clear choice that works best when it's hot and wet outside.

"Your standard metal structure conventional blades are ideal for summer conditions," he says. These are a fairly inexpensive option that also has the added benefit of being able to fit most of the cars you'll need to work on.

Smith explains another advantage: "The rubber compound that's used to produce these wipers is more flexible under warmer

conditions."

THE WIPER WEATHER FACTOR

Bean blades offer a more flexible option since the rubber used performs well in either cold or warmer conditions. These are great for customers who don't want to go to the bother of changing blades to meet seasonal weather shifts. They're also tailor made for a wet summer.

"There's also a coating that gets used on the rubber that prevents dust, dirt and salt buildup," Smith says, adding, these flat blades don't have a lot of moving parts so there's less chance of build-up over the dog days of summer.

"The third type is a hybrid," Smith says. "This is a recent trend with a lot of European cars like Mercedes and BMWs having these as original parts."

Basically this is a conventional blade with a piece of plastic covering the moving parts. It's a little more expensive than the other options here in Canada.

Kevin O'Dowd, vice-president of marketing with Crowne Group (wiper blades manufacturer TRICO was bought by Crowne), has some other helpful hints for shop owners putting together a summer maintenance package.

"Summer sun and heat can accelerate the

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