

## STARTING THE SPRING OFF ON THE RIGHT FOOT



**N**ow that Winter is behind us, at least for the most part, it is time to get the steed out of the barn. Some of us place our pride and joy Mustangs in storage during the winter months, some go so far as to “bagging” our cars in a climate controlled, humidity managed protective capsule. On the other extreme, some of us pull the car into the garage in the fall, turn the ignition off and don’t turn the key again till spring. Most of us probably fall somewhere in between these extremes. If this is the case for you, here are a few tips for returning your car to the street in the same or better shape that it was when it was put to rest for the winter.

The first thing I do in the spring is change the oil and filter; even if you only have 1,000 miles on the oil I recommend changing it. Oil can separate, degrade, and accumulate moisture from the combustion process. Don’t run that muck through your engine in the spring, spend a few bucks and change it. While you are at it, check a spark plug or two and make sure they are holding up OK, odds are they will be just fine, but why take the chance, in only a few minutes you can check them and be sure they are fine.

Air filters are typically forgotten about when checking your car over. Many of us have converted our car over to an aftermarket cold air kit, or at least have installed an aftermarket air filter. Many of these air filters are cleanable and re-usable. There are two things you need to keep in mind when you have an aftermarket filter. One, the performance gain you get from this filter is due to reduced restriction of air as the engine requires it. As your aftermarket filter collects dirt, bugs, leaves, small animals, etc. the “performance” of the filter is quickly reduced. So to keep the filter performing and your engine performing, I would check and potentially clean the filter at each oil change (every 3,000 miles or six months). Two, if you have a re-usable filter, be sure you let it dry completely after washing it, then oil modestly, do not over oil, this will cause oil molecules to build up on electronic components causing them to malfunction or fail. Now that your engine has fresh oil flowing through its veins and a clean filter for breathing it is time to consider a few less obvious items.

How is your gas...in your car I mean? If you have a car that is tuned for 91 or 93 Octane fuel, and you filled your tank completely

prior to putting her up for the winter, a chemical change has been occurring all winter, the results of this chemical change results in a lowering of the actual octane level of the fuel in your tank. Though it is not an extreme change over the course of four to six months, it is still a change. So what, you might think, well if you have a boosted engine with a tune that squeezes the last bit of performance from your premium fuel, you will not have the same performance sitting in your fuel tank and worst case you may be running on the lean side at extreme conditions. So, run the winter fuel through your car on the street, don’t head to the track on the first spring day and run the winter fuel out under severe duty driving.

Next, check your tires for correct air pressure. Almost every tire will loose air pressure as it goes through significant temperature changes. While you are at it, check the tires for wear, don’t forget to look at the inside of the tire tread, this area will wear when your alignment is out of spec and can indicate worn suspension components. Your tires will tell you a lot about how your cars suspension is performing or not.

When was the last time the brake pads were changed? Brake fluid is a fluid that should be changed as your car ages. Brake fluid gathers contamination from brake part wear and collects moisture from the atmosphere; both will reduce the performance of the brake fluid and your brake system as a whole.

Final check is the transmission fluid, coolant level and power steering fluid level. I know it sounds like a lot, but will probably take less than two hours to perform all of these steps and will make that first ride in the spring all the more enjoyable!

See you on the road!

*Scott Hoag*

