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Don't Be in the Dark About Vehicle Lighting Issues

With Daylight Saving Time (DST) taking effect at the end of October in most of the U.S., darkness falls a little sooner. However, with less light comes more opportunity for your shop.

In my opinion, vehicle lighting is an overlooked service. While driving, I often notice many vehicles that have lighting systems that are not functioning properly. Burned-out headlamps, tail lamps and braking lights are probably the most common culprits. But sometimes I'll notice a vehicle with headlights that don't appear bright enough - an obvious safety hazard for that driver. Or I'll be the recipient of another vehicle's headlamps beaming into my eyes, making it hard for me to drive safely. A lot of times, that problem could be resolved if other drivers had their headlamp beam aim checked.

The problem with vehicle lighting issues is that vehicle owners may not notice a light that isn't working or is aimed too high. That's why it's up to you, their repair specialist, to inspect their vehicle's lighting system.

One idea for your shop to generate additional profits is to create a vehicle lighting checklist that encompasses exterior and interior lighting. When the vehicle owner is having their vehicle serviced for a different system, ask them if they want a lighting inspection test.

According to Counterman magazine's Professional Automotive Repair Technician Survey, 10 is the average number of lighting replacement jobs performed each month at independent shops. And since 86% of independent shops surveyed said they stock common lamps, bulbs and fuses, servicing lighting systems is a quick and easy way to keep your customers safer and increase your business' sales.

Servicing lighting systems does offer sales potential for your shop. According to the Car Care Council, results from a recent National Car Care Month inspection found that:

- 8% of vehicles inspected needed work on at least one of their turn signals;
- 6% of vehicles had problems with at least one of their brake lights; and
- 5% of vehicles failed their side light inspection.

Another idea - if your shop has the room - is to create a headlamp aiming target on the back wall of one of your bays. Paint or tape horizontal lines on the wall where you can test the aim of high and low beams of your customers' vehicles. If the lights do not shine in the recommended target area, you should set the lamps accordingly. For more helpful information on lighting, log onto the Motor Vehicle Lighting Council (MVLIC)'s redesigned website. The website, www.mvlc.info, is a resource to learn about advanced automotive lighting technologies such as Xenon (also known as HID - High Intensity Discharge), Adaptive Forward Lighting System (AFS) and Light Emitting Diode (LED). All of these are becoming available features on new vehicles. Underhood Service will provide articles on these new lighting technologies in future issues. So stay tuned.

Did you know...

Daylight Saving Time (DST) in the U.S. is not observed in Hawaii, Arizona and most of the Eastern Time Zone area of Indiana. However, the Navajo Indian Reservation in Arizona does observe DST due to its large size and location in three states. U.S. territories that do not observe DST include American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

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