

DIAGNOSING DANGEROUS TROUBLE WARNING SIGNS

In nearly everyone's life the most dangerous thing you do is drive your car. These tell-tale signs of impending mechanical failure should not be ignored.

TROUBLE LEAKS

Green, yellow, or orange puddles may be a coolant leak, an indication the engine will soon run hot—overheating can cause expensive engine damage.

Red puddles are likely to be automatic transmission fluid which will ruin the transmission.

Shiny oily coating seen on the inside of the tire could be gear lube leaking on the tire which can cause the car to spin out of control in the rain.

Oily streaks seen on the wheel and inside or outside of the tire could indicate a heated up wheel bearing which may fail at anytime and cause the axle to break.

Wet carpet on the front floor could indicate a leaking heater core which will cause engine overheating.

TROUBLE SMELLS

Burning leaves smell can come from leaves getting into the blower motor which may lead to a fire inside the heater.

Burning rubber or plastic after driving awhile, coming from *inside* the car, especially from the dash area is likely an electrical overload or a short circuit burning the wire insulation. Coming from *outside* the car is likely an electrical overload or a short circuit or chafed wire. A hose may be touching a hot engine part, a seized pulley is burning a fan belt, or an overheated tire caused by a dragging brake or a flat tire.

Exhaust smell means dangerous carbon monoxide is leaking into the passenger compartment.

Gasoline odor is very dangerous and poses a big fire hazard.

Hot metal odor coming from under the car accompanied with hot floorboards is an overheating catalytic converter which may catch the undercoating or carpets on fire.

Rotten eggs, burning sulfur that persists after warm-up could be caused by the engine running rich which will lead to early engine or catalytic converter failure.

Sulfuric acid especially from the area of the battery indicates an overcharging battery which could explode.

TROUBLE SMOKE

Black or gray smoke accompanied by a drop in gas mileage can lead to accelerated engine wear or a melted catalytic converter.

Blue smoke is usually an indication of a worn out engine, although there are other less expensive mechanical failures which can be the cause.

White smoke coming out the tailpipe indicates a leaking engine headgasket and imminent engine failure. Coming from under the hood indicates coolant is leaking onto hot exhaust parts and could cause an underhood fire. Coming from the wheel well accompanied by strong burning odor indicates dragging brakes which could cause loss of brakes.

TROUBLE NOISES

Gurgling coming from the front console area could mean low coolant level, and is accompanied no heater can lead to engine overheating, blown headgasket, or a bursting heater core which can spew scalding hot coolant onto the occupant's feet.



Ticking or tapping which occurs when coming to a stop after high speed driving could indicate low engine oil pressure and the engine may soon fail.

Clunk, bang, pop when turning or going over bumps can be caused by a loose ball joint, which can come apart and cause a loss of steering.

Clunking popping during turns or braking could indicate loose or worn suspension components which could lead to rapid tire wear or a loss of traction. If the popping or binding happens on turns and the vehicle is All Wheel Drive or 4 Wheel Drive, the all wheel drive unit is failing.

Grinding which changes intensity during turns or braking usually indicates a failing wheel bearing which could lead to a broken axle or the wheel coming off.

OTHER TROUBLE SIGNS

Blinking check engine light flashing one time per second indicated an engine or exhaust emission control damaging condition.

Brake fluid level that drops quickly in the reservoir indicates a soon-to-fail brake system.

Headlights flicker or go out for a moment usually means the headlight switch is failing.

Loose/stiff steering wheel with excessive steering play, hard-to-turn stiffness, or is rapidly becoming "loose" can indicate a loose or failing steering component and imminent loss of steering.

Sagging on one side of the car is usually caused by a broken suspension spring which may puncture the tire and cause a sudden blowout.

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