



Managing maintenance

How to make sure fleet vehicles get proper care

Just because cars and trucks are more reliable than ever before does not mean that maintenance is a thing of the past. Educating your fleet users about the importance of prevention and regular check-ups is key to keeping your fleet sweet and on the road.

Across the board, vehicle quality is at an all-time high regardless of the vehicle class or manufacturer, yet managing preventative maintenance remains a challenge.

There is no doubt regularly scheduled maintenance and verifiable maintenance records affect resale values, driver safety, fuel efficiency, repair costs and the integrity of manufacturers' warranties. As a result, fleets that need drivers to play a role in preventative maintenance now include the proper care and maintenance of company-owned equipment in their policies and job descriptions.

"Employees' focus is on fixing the next furnace or visiting the next doctor on the list, so fleets need to set and communicate their expectations around the proper care and use of company equipment, whether it's a vehicle, a laptop or a cell phone," says Wayne Rose, vice-president of operations at Jim Pattison Lease.

Driver education on the importance of maintenance such as oil changes, tire rotations and tire pressure checks and their effect on resale values, fuel efficiency, safety and warranties is imperative, adds Ryan D'Souza, manager of fleet services with Jim Pattison Lease in Calgary.

Some fleet experts suggest that tracking maintenance and mileage is more important when managing costs on large fleets, while others point out that such due diligence will have an impact on the bottom line regardless of fleet size.

"Upping the frequency of the odometer checks makes sense on all fleets. If you're only checking odometer readings when the vehicles goes in for service, particularly on high-mileage fleets, you're not doing it often enough to accurately monitor cost per kilometre or forecast vehicle replacement," says Rose, who notes fleets rely on fleet cards, dashboards, reporting and web portals to facilitate and expedite the process.

Understandably, individuals put work-related tasks first, so firms like Jim Pattison Lease have been making preventative maintenance and odometer reading reminders a part of their maintenance packages to facilitate the proper care of vehicles.

"After 33 years in the business, maintenance reminders are as important to fleet operations as ever, but our delivery methods have evolved with the technology," says Rose. "In the past, we mailed postcards—today, those have been replaced by electronic follow-ups."

However, as much as reminders, education and corporate policies help keep drivers and their vehicles on the proper maintenance track, companies need to recognize that they can only do so much. Certain employees will always take better care of their equipment, while others will do just enough to meet expectations and commitment. Whether they're at work or at home, that attention to detail is—or is not—part of who they are.

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