

# Cloudy headlamps a significant safety concern

(MS) -- Many drivers feel less comfortable behind the wheel at night than they do during the day, when daylight makes it easier to see fellow motorists as well as pedestrians. Nighttime can compromise a driver's vision, and that reduced vision is a key factor in traffic fatalities, nearly half of which occur at night.

Though traffic accidents are a byproduct of a host of factors, headlamp clouding is one of them and a growing problem for many motorists. Vehicles equipped with plastic headlamp lenses can become hazed and yellowed from the effects of sunlight, ozone, road pollu-

tion and the chemicals used in car washes. When driving at night, cloudy headlamps combine with little or no natural light to decrease visibility and pose a significant safety threat to drivers, their passengers and fellow motorists. Drivers cannot increase the amount of natural light at night, but there are steps they can take to improve their nighttime visibility.

\* Address cloudy headlamps. Plastic headlamp lenses, especially as they age, reduce headlight output considerably, compromising nighttime vision and the safety of drivers and their passengers. But as

potentially dangerous as cloudy headlamps can be, it's just as easy for drivers to address the issue before it becomes a problem. Employing an advanced technology that works with minimal effort, the Philips Headlight Restoration Kit is designed for do-it-yourselfers and can help restore headlight lenses to like-new condition in less than 30 minutes. In lieu of a costly headlamp replacement, the Philips Headlight Restoration Kit allows motorists to quickly and significantly improve the light output of their headlamps, taillights, turn signals and reflective lens covers.

\* Keep wiper blades fresh. Vision is already compromised at night, when the lack of natural light can make it difficult to see pedestrians or animals on the road. That visibility is only further compromised by brittle or ineffective wiper blades, which should be changed every 90-120 days to ensure optimal performance. Drivers who live in areas with heavy rain or snowfall should inspect their wiper blades more frequently, especially if there is pitting on the windshield.

\* Check the windshield washer periodically. The windshield washer is an often overlooked aspect of

vehicle maintenance. Unfortunately, it's typically too late by the time many motorists notice an issue with their windshield washer. Don't fall victim to a faulty windshield washer in the middle of a rainstorm or a blizzard. Inspect the windshield washer periodically to ensure it's working properly and keep the fluid level topped off so it's there when you need it.

\* Think ahead. In addition to addressing existing issues, drivers can take steps to ensure their nighttime visibility is protected over the long haul. The Philips Headlight Restoration Kit, for example, employs a pro-

ductive UV coating that can prevent future clouding for up to two years. In addition to addressing the headlamps, consider how your visibility is likely to be affected during the worst possible snowstorm or on a night with torrential rains. Keep those conditions in mind when deciding whether or not to hang any fuzzy dice or other trinkets from your rearview mirror. While such items can add a touch of personality to your vehicle, the decreased visibility such items can cause is not worth the cost over the long haul.

# Road trip tips for spring drivers

Spring is a season of rebirth for many people, who welcome the warm weather with open arms, especially those who just endured a harsh winter. Spending time outdoors when the weather warms up is a popular pastime for many people each spring.

Road trips taken by college kids or high schoolers hitting the road for spring break or professionals and parents packing up the car for a weekend getaway have become synonymous with spring. A road trip is a great way to get outdoors and make the most of a warm day, but there are a few tricks of the trade drivers can employ to ensure their road trips are as enjoyable as possible.

\* Give your car a good wash. Drivers who live in areas with heavy snowfall should give their vehicles a thorough cleaning before hitting the road for a spring road trip. Salt and sand can build up on a vehicle over the course of a snowy winter, so a power washing will help remove excess salt, sand or dirt and help the car run more smoothly.

\* Get the vehicle a tune-up. A tune-up, including an oil change, should be part of your pre-trip planning. Make sure winter hasn't caused any damage to the vehicle's body and ask your mechanic to perform a thorough inspection of the vehicle's suspension and brakes. If any problems arise, address them before embarking on your road trip.

\* Subscribe to a roadside assistance program. Roadside assistance programs, whether it's AAA or a program offered



through your insurance company, provide a measure of security to road-trippers. Many roadside assistance programs provide variety of emergency assistance for members, including:

- towing service if your vehicle cannot start or operate safely,
- battery service if your car's battery needs a jump,
- flat tire service if you get a flat tire and don't have a spare or cannot change the tire yourself,
- fuel delivery service if

your car runs out of gas, and

- lockout service if you lock your keys in the car.

These services can act as a safety net should an issue arise when you're on the road and far away from home or far away from a service station. Keep your membership card in your wallet and store their customer service number in your cellular phone should you accidentally lose your membership card or lock it inside your car.

\* Bring cash as well as

credit cards on the trip. When embarking on a road trip, don't assume you will have ready access to an ATM on your trip or at your destination. This means you may reach a point when you have no cash on hand. While it's a good idea to bring some cash along on the trip, bring a credit card or cards as well should you find yourself with no cash. A major credit card, such as a Mastercard, American Express or Visa, is likely to

be accepted at most filling stations.

\* Invest in a road navigation system. A road navigation system can be your best friend, helping you find your way in places with which you are unfamiliar. Road navigation systems can alert you to traffic conditions while providing directions and alternate routes. Some systems will even alert you to nearby filling stations, lodging or restaurants.

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