



COURTESY OF ARACONTENT

Half-ton truck owners now have a full-sized snowplow

(ARA) — With more than 2.5 million half-ton pickups sold annually, these trucks are beloved for their versatility and durability. Whether they're being used to pull a trailer or haul a heavy load, half-ton pickups work hard and are fun to drive. And now, almost every half-ton pickup truck can also serve as an efficient, effective snow-clearing machine.

This is good news for homeowners and small business owners who are looking to maximize their existing equipment in an effort to save time and money.

Taming winter's fury

As daylight fades and winter weather gets closer, homeowners and small business owners in the north turn their attention to snow removal options. While many will maintain snow removal contracts or perhaps purchase a new snow thrower, others will investigate the benefits of outfitting their pickup truck with a snowplow.

One of the most essential benefits to equipping your truck with a snowplow is the amount of time that is saved. Depending on the size of your driveway or parking lot, a snowplow will get the job done in a fraction of the time it takes to remove snow with a snow thrower.

Another key benefit is cost-savings, especially if you contract with a snow removal professional. Handling your own snow management ensures that you can easily maintain lots and driveways, and often the initial snowplow investment can pay for itself in savings over one or two winters.

Independence is another factor that draws many homeowners and small business owners to investing in a snowplow. By being responsible for your plowing needs, you no longer have to wait for a contractor. When there's a snowstorm, simply hop in your truck and take care of your own snowplowing, on your own schedule. This is often especially important for retail business owners with liability concerns.

Another benefit is health and safety. Each year, health-related injuries occur as a result of snow

removal. Muscle and back problems are common occurrences while, luckily not as frequent, some individuals even suffer heart attacks. Using a snowplow allows you to move snow with less stress, all from the comfort of your own vehicle.

Making the most of your half-ton

Until recently, homeowners and small business owners couldn't seriously consider a legitimate snowplow for their half-ton pickup. That's because in an effort to maximize fuel economy, manufacturers began building half-ton trucks with lighter axles, frames and suspension. While these lighter packages helped to increase miles per gallon, standard size commercial snowplows were too heavy and exceeded truck manufacturers' gross vehicle weight limitations.

Fortunately, snowplow manufacturers recognized these manufacturing improvements and responded with new lines of full-sized, full-featured snowplows designed for light commercial, institutional and home use specifically for half-ton truck owners.

Each of these plows offer similar features as their larger counterparts, including rugged steel construction, fast and easy mounting systems and hydraulics, and important safety features.

The plows are available at local truck equipment dealers and snowplow dealers who specialize in snowplow installation and set-up. Dealers can also provide accessories, parts and service as well as plowing information and tips for new plowers.

For more information on the new full-sized, full-featured snowplows built specifically for half-ton trucks, or to view a dealer directory, visit these manufacturers' Web sites: www.westernplows.com, www.fisherplows.com and www.blizzardplows.com.

Are 3,000 Mile Oil Changes Really Necessary?

(ARA) — For years, drivers have been hearing about changing their motor oil every 3,000 miles, but times have changed, and the "3,000-mile mantra" may or may not apply to you and your car.

The 3,000 mile oil change is a conservative approach to maintaining your vehicle that, according to General Motors, dates back to 1968. It's also an oil change interval that continues to be encouraged by the automotive oil change industry.

Automobile manufacturers cite modern oil and engine technology as the reason why oil change intervals can be extended. Numerous factors come in to play in determining the oil change interval you should follow including: The car you drive and the way you drive it, oil and filter selection and whether your vehicle has an oil life monitoring system.

Every automobile manufacturer establishes recommended oil change intervals for each model they manufacture. Oil change intervals are now between 5,000 and 7,500 miles for many new cars.

You should follow your car manufacturer's recommendations on oil change intervals while the car is under warranty. If your car is no longer under warranty, you can extend your oil change intervals by upgrading to synthetic motor oil. This will reduce the number of oil changes saving you time and money, and reducing the amount of oil purchased and disposed.

There are a number of quality synthetic motor oils available to choose from. Most lubricant manufacturers will give a recommended number of miles you can drive between oil changes under normal conditions. The number of miles you can allow between oil changes will depend on the way you drive and the oxidation stability (useful oil life) of the motor oil.

Oxidation stability can be measured by international standards board ASTM's rigorous Thin Film Oxidation Uptake Test (TFOUT). The test is so severe that it lasts 1,300 minutes. Conventional motor oils typically last less than 300 minutes. Synthetic motor oils typically last less than 500 minutes. One high performance synthetic motor oil, Royal Purple has been shown to outlast the duration of the test. Royal Purple motor oils are recommended to extend oil change intervals to as much as 12,000 miles under normal driving conditions. The motor oil has also been shown to improve fuel economy.

If you elect to upgrade your motor oil, you should also upgrade your oil filter. Low quality filters are often made with the 3,000 mile interval in mind and may go into 'bypass' mode shortly thereafter. Check the recommended filter change interval on any filter your purchase.

A fairly new technology impacting oil change intervals is the 'oil life monitor.' Many people are unaware that oil life monitor systems are simply computer software algorithms that determine when to change oil based on engine operating conditions. An oil life monitor looks at mileage, speed and idling time to calculate when you should change the oil. A better name for the oil life monitor might be 'oil life predictor.'

There is no actual oil condition sensor or a chemical analysis of the oil. In fact, you could drain the oil and replace it with any fluid and the oil change monitor would have no way of knowing it. Additionally, the oil life monitor does not monitor how well your oil filter is filtering the oil in your system. Contaminated oil is just as, if not more harmful than



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You can drive more miles between oil changes by upgrading to synthetic motor oil and a premium oil filter

oxidized motor oil. The bottom line is that an oil life monitor is a useful tool that should be used in concert with common sense and good judgment.

Whether or not you have an oil change monitor, if your car is still under warranty, stick with the car manufacturer's recommended oil change intervals. If your car is no longer under warranty, you can go beyond the typical 3,000 mile oil change or beyond the oil change monitor's recommendations by upgrading to a high performance synthetic motor oil and high performance oil filter.

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TRUCK

From Page 15

Four Wheel Drive Operation

If your truck has 4WD, check the operation of all components. Make sure items such as locking hubs, the transfer lever, and push button engagement all move freely and actually engage and disengage. The middle of a snow storm is not the time to find out that your 4WD doesn't work.

Everyone who drives your truck should know how to operate its 4WD system.

Paint Protection

- Cold, ice, snow, salt, and cinders are hard on your pickup truck's paint finish, so start winter with a good coat of wax.
- Wash the truck as often as possible during the winter. Be sure to clean in the wheel wells and underneath the truck.

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