

Hazy Lights Mean Risky Nights: Dim Headlights Haunt America's Cars, Reducing Visibility and Increasing Risks of Accidents

- National Headlight Safety Month in October to Help Educate Drivers About the Risks of, and Solutions for, Headlight Safety -

There is a safety issue on America's roads that rarely comes to light: dim headlight bulbs and hazy headlight lenses, both of which may lead to reduced visibility. As Daylight Savings Time ends, and kids hit the streets trick-or-treating, the importance of clear nighttime visibility increases.

3M Car Care, AAA Foundation and the Automotive Aftermarket Industry Association (AAIA) hope to bring awareness to this problem with National Headlight Safety Month, which kicks off October 1. The public safety campaign is designed to educate car owners about the risks of dim headlights and how they can improve their visibility and safety on the road with quick, cost-effective repairs. Automotive experts Sam Memmolo and Courtney Hansen will provide safety tips, project ideas and how-to videos on www.3MCarCare.com, YouTube 3M Car Care Channel and the Facebook 3M-US Car Care group.

Reduced visibility due to poor headlights may be more rampant than people realize. The AAIA Car Care Council found that 26 percent of the cars it inspected had issues with their lighting system. According to automotive lighting manufacturer Sylvania, headlight bulbs dim over time, and when one bulb burns out, both bulbs should be replaced. Replacing bulbs before they burn out is a commonly ignored automotive maintenance step.

Another chief culprit of dim headlights is the plastic headlight lens. Millions of cars on the road today have plastic headlight lenses. Unfortunately, these lenses typically don't hold up to weather and time; they may become hazed and yellowed, reducing the light output from the headlamp. The problem increases with the age of the lens, and with the average age of cars on the road at about 10 years old, the problem is growing. In addition, the more sun or salt a vehicle is exposed to, the more likely that its plastic headlight lenses may be hazy. This is a common issue on many domestic and foreign automobiles, and isn't limited to less-expensive vehicles. It's not uncommon for luxury cars to have hazy headlight lenses, too.

"When you walk through a parking lot or drive in traffic today, you see a number of cars with hazed headlights, non-working lights, streaky windshield wipers and broken side view mirrors," said Sam Memmolo, host of "Sam's Garage" radio show and longtime expert on car repair and restoration. "Every one of these cars may create a danger to the driver and other people on the road. But with some basic education about car care and maintenance, all car owners can take care of these problems before they cause accidents."

Among the tips and solutions offered through National Headlight Safety Month are Vehicle Visibility Safety Checks, repair projects for hazed headlights and guides for replacing headlamps and wiper blades. Concurrently, the AAA Foundation is sponsoring "Heads-Up Driving Week" starting October 5 to educate consumers about the need for attentive driving, and the AAIA is sponsoring "Fall Car Care Month"; the three initiatives combined will offer consumers many suggestions for staying safe while they drive.

"3M's goal for National Headlight Safety Month is to help reduce accidents that may be caused by limited visibility on the road," said Julie Elepano, marketing manager for 3M Car Care. "By working with great partners like the AAA Foundation and the AAIA, we can get the message out to millions of people that there are simple, affordable solutions for improving your visibility in the car, and the visibility of your car to other drivers."

While replacing headlamps and windshield wiper blades have traditionally been inexpensive repairs, the solution for hazed headlight lenses hasn't been quite so simple. Replacing the lens can cost up to \$1,500. The consumer repair products in the past just polished the lens but didn't completely repair the damage, remove the hazing or improve the clarity.

But now, a new category of repair kits makes it easy for car owners to do the repair themselves, and the category has grown some 140 percent in just 18 months time. Two solutions from 3M Car Care - the 3M Headlight Lens Restoration System and the 3M Lens Renewal Kit - allow car owners to do the job themselves in less than an hour, with just a cordless drill, all for less than \$30.

"With one trip to a local auto parts store, a car owner can make their car - and themselves - a whole lot safer on the road," said Courtney Hansen, host of "Powerblock" on Spike TV. "It only takes a cordless or electric drill for the job. For less than \$30 and about an hour of work, people can greatly improve their light output and visibility on the road, not to mention the appearance of their vehicle. These new headlight repair kits from 3M allow anyone to fix this problem themselves - saving money and helping them drive more safely on the road."

The 3M Car Care product line can be found at leading automotive aftermarket retailers and online at www.Shop3M.com. For more information on 3M Car Care products, visit www.3MCarCare.com.

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