

VEHICLE FIRES

According to recently completed research by NFPA, U.S. public fire departments responded to an estimated 266,500 highway-type vehicle fires during 2004. These fires claimed 520 lives, caused 1,300 injuries and nearly a billion dollars in property damage. Also, highway vehicle fires accounted for 17 percent of all reported fires and 13 percent of all civilian fire deaths. In 2004, highway vehicle fires caused more deaths than apartment fires

The public needs to be more aware of this serious fire safety issue and take measures to lessen the risk of an incident.”

The size and seriousness of the vehicle fire problem in the United States is prompting AAA to advise all motorists to be alert to vehicle maintenance issues that can cause fires, and to know what actions they should take if their vehicle is involved in a fire.”

To further reduce the risks associated with vehicle fires, consumers need to be knowledgeable about what to do and not to do if their vehicle catches fire. If a vehicle fire occurs, stop, get out and call for help as quickly as possible. Attempting to fight the fire yourself can lead to serious injury or death and should be avoided.

STOP - If possible, pull to the side of the road and turn off the ignition. Pulling to the side makes it possible for everyone to get out of the vehicle safely. Turn off the ignition to shut off the electric current and stop the flow of gasoline. Put the vehicle in park or set the emergency brake; you don't want the vehicle to move after your leave it. Do not open the hood because more oxygen can make the fire larger and exposes you to a sudden flare up.

GET OUT- Make sure everyone gets out of the vehicle, but do not waste time and increase risk by removing personal belongings. Then move at least 100 feet away. Keep traffic in mind and keep everyone together. There is not only danger from the fire, but also from other vehicles moving in the area.

CALL FOR HELP- Call 911 or the emergency number for your local fire department. Firefighters are specially trained to combat vehicle fires. Never return to the vehicle to attempt to fight the fire yourself. Vehicle fires can be tricky, even for firefighters. Pressurized components can burst or explode, spilling or spraying highly flammable liquids, or eject projectiles than can cause serious injuries.

To reduce the risk of a vehicle fire, AAA makes these recommendations:

- Have your vehicles inspected at least annually by a trained, professional technician.
- Watch for fluid leaks under vehicles, cracked or blistered hoses, or wiring that is loose, has exposed metal or has cracked insulation. Have any of these conditions inspected and repaired as soon as possible.
- Be alert to changes in the way your vehicle sounds when running, or to a visible plume of exhaust coming from the tailpipe.
- Avoid smoking. If you must smoke, use your vehicle ashtray.
- Drive according to posted speed limits and other traffic rules. Remain alert to changing road conditions at all times.

BE FIRE SAFE
JACKSON FIREFIGHTERS