



News Release

Media Contact:
Georjeane Blumling, Ph.D
Vice President Public Relations
757-233-3825
Gblum@tidewater.aaa.com

AAA Warns Potholes Can Spring Up – Protect Your Car

VIRGINIA BEACH, VA, February 21, 2012– When ole man winter is on his way out he may leave behind an unpleasant reminder of his presence – potholes. Although this season has been milder there will still be some tire-rattling craters out there. AAA Tidewater Virginia has some expert advice on how to protect your car from these potentially dangerous road hazards.

“Even with the milder winter, we’re sure to see some potholes cropping up” said Georjeane Blumling, Vice President of Public Relations for AAA Tidewater Virginia. “Potholes are not only vexing and nerve-rattling to motorists; they are also a safety threat. You can lose control of your vehicle if you hit a pothole, possibly leading to a crash, and it’s just as dangerous to swerve to avoid a pothole. It is a good idea to slow down, and be extra alert, so you can be safe and avoid damage to your car as well.”

Potholes form when moisture collects in small holes and cracks in the road surface. As temperatures rise and fall, the moisture expands and contracts due to freezing and thawing. This breaks up the pavement and, combined with the weight of passing cars, eventually results in a pothole.

To aid motorists in protecting their vehicles from pothole damage, AAA recommends the following:

Inspect Tires – The tire is the most important cushion between a car and a pothole. Make sure tires have enough tread and are properly inflated. To check the tread depth, insert a quarter into the tread groove with Washington’s head upside down. The tread should cover part of Washington’s head. If it doesn’t, then it’s time to start shopping for new tires. When checking tire pressures, ensure they are inflated to the manufacturer’s recommended levels, which can be found in the owner’s manual or on a sticker on the driver’s door jamb. Do not use the pressure levels stamped on the sidewall of the tire.

Inspect Suspension – Make certain struts and shock absorbers are in good condition. Changes in vehicle handling, excessive vibration or uneven tire wear can indicate bad shocks or struts. Have the suspension inspected by a certified technician if you suspect problems.

Look Ahead – Make a point of checking the road ahead for potholes. An alert driver may have time to avoid potholes, so it’s important to stay focused on the road and not any distractions inside or outside the vehicle. Before swerving to avoid a pothole, check surrounding traffic to ensure this will not cause a collision or endanger nearby pedestrians or cyclists.

Slow Down – If a pothole cannot be avoided, reduce speed safely being sure to check the rearview mirror before any abrupt braking. Hitting a pothole at higher speeds greatly increases the chance of damage to tires, wheels and suspension components.

Beware of Puddles – A puddle of water can disguise a deep pothole. Use care when driving through puddles and treat them as though they may be hiding potholes.

-MORE-

Check Alignment – Hitting a pothole can knock a car’s wheels out of alignment and affect the steering. If a vehicle pulls to the left or right, have the wheel alignment checked by a qualified technician.

Recognize Noises/Vibrations – A hard pothole impact can dislodge wheel weights, damage a tire or wheel, and bend or even break suspension components. Any new or unusual noises or vibrations that appear after hitting a pothole should be inspected immediately by a certified technician.

The relatively mild winter could also mean more work zones popping up earlier in the spring. Motorists will need to watch out for work zone workers as the weather warms up. Typically, if the weather is milder than expected, the Department of Transportation slides its unused budgets allocated for winter road treatment and snow removal into spring road paving programs. Motorists will need to keep alert for reduced speeds, roughly milled roads and changing traffic patterns and delays, while these much-needed highway improvement projects are underway.

To help consumers identify quality auto repair shops that can maintain and repair their vehicles, AAA established the Approved Auto Repair program as a free public service. Approved Auto Repair shops are inspected by AAA automotive specialists and must meet and maintain high professional standards for technical training, equipment, cleanliness and customer service. Customers of approved shops are continually surveyed, and every approved facility must maintain a 90 percent or higher customer satisfaction score in all areas. Consumers can locate nearby AAA Approved Auto Repair facilities online at AAA.com/Repair.

As part of North America’s largest motoring and leisure travel organization, AAA Tidewater Virginia provides its more than 325,000 members with travel, insurance, financial and automotive-related services. Since its founding AAA Tidewater Virginia has been a leader and advocate for the safety and security of all travelers. For more information, visit AAA.com and follow us on Twitter at [Twitter.com/AAATWnews](https://twitter.com/AAATWnews).

###

AAA news releases, high resolution images, broadcast-quality video, fact sheets and podcasts are available on the AAA NewsRoom at AAA.com/news.

Stay connected with AAA on the web via:

[Twitter.com/AAAnews](https://twitter.com/AAAnews)

[Twitter.com/AAASafety](https://twitter.com/AAASafety)

[Twitter.com/AAAauto](https://twitter.com/AAAauto)

[YouTube.com/AAA](https://www.youtube.com/AAA)

[MySpace.com/AAAeveryday](https://myspace.com/AAAeveryday)

[Facebook.com/AAAFanPage](https://facebook.com/AAAFanPage)