



Know Before You Go: Car Repair Tips for Travelers

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MADISON – Road warriors rejoice! The season of the family road trip is here.

For most travelers, this means a leisurely jaunt to a favorite getaway. But some travelers may trade leisure for frustration when an automotive breakdown occurs. If you are on the road and you need repair services, the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) offers tips to help consumers know their rights when they are faced with an unexpected auto repair.

“Getting towed to a repair shop can be a stressful situation for any driver,” said Frank Frassetto, Division Administrator for Trade and Consumer Protection. “Thankfully Wisconsin has a number of protections in place to make sure that consumers are treated fairly and consistently at repair shops statewide.”

If you are in an unfamiliar town and are looking for help during normal business hours, seek out the local chamber of commerce for guidance. Do as much research as you can before you commit to a repair shop, and inquire with DATCP’s Consumer Protection Hotline (800-422-7128) to find out if complaints have been filed against a particular business.

During your journey, remember these helpful car repair tips:

- If you drop your car off during regular business hours, Wisconsin car repair shops must get your authorization for any repair and must offer you an estimate if repairs will cost \$50 or more. Receiving a repair bill that is more than you were told is illegal in Wisconsin.
- An invoice must describe the work done and should list each repair with the parts replaced and their costs; labor charges; the odometer reading when you brought the vehicle in; and the date the vehicle was returned to you.
- There is no “standard warranty” on repairs. Make sure you understand what is covered under your warranty and get it in writing.
- The shop must return replaced parts to you if you ask for them before the repair begins. Warranty parts or parts exchanged for rebuilding need not be returned, but must be made available to you for inspection.

Should you need to drop your car off outside of regular business hours, you must remember to ask the business to call you with an estimate **before** they start working on your vehicle. Unauthorized repairs are not allowed, but if you drop off your car with a note to repair something and you do not ask for an initial estimate, the shop can proceed with the repairs regardless of the cost to you.

For additional information or to file a complaint, visit the Consumer Protection Bureau at datcp.wisconsin.gov, call the Consumer Protection Hotline or send an e-mail to datcp@wisconsin.gov.

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