

3,000-Mile Oil Change Comes Under Fire

The standard 3,000-mile oil change interval is under attack. Promoted for years by most motor oil companies and quick lube businesses as an essential part of proper vehicle maintenance, the public has become much more skeptical in recent years. In fact, searches for "3,000 mile oil change" in top Internet search engines such as Google and Yahoo! primarily yield articles and blog postings that challenge the practice and refer to it as a "scam" or "myth."

AMSOIL synthetic motor oil was introduced in 1972 as the only motor oil on the market recommended for 25,000-mile/one year drain intervals, and the company has spent much of the last 36 years as the lone voice promoting the benefits of extended drain intervals. However, AMSOIL has recently welcomed an increasing number of companies and organizations to the party. Although they still don't recommend drain intervals as long as AMSOIL recommendations, the momentum is growing.

Vehicle manufacturers have mostly recommended oil change intervals exceeding 3,000 miles in recent years. In fact, most recommend intervals of 5,000 miles or more. Ford Motor Company recommends drain intervals of 7,500 miles in its model year 2007 and newer vehicles, while other manufacturers incorporate oil monitoring systems in their newer vehicles that allow motorists to extend drain intervals even further.

In its December 2006 issue, *Consumer Reports* encourages drivers to follow the longer oil change recommendations of vehicle manufacturers, saying, "Although oil companies and quick-lube shops like to promote this idea [that engine oil should be changed every 3,000 miles], it's usually not necessary. Go by the recommended oil-change schedule in your vehicle's owner's manual. Most vehicles driven under normal conditions can go 7,500 miles or more between oil changes. Some models now come with a monitoring system that alerts the driver when the oil needs changing. Depending on driving conditions, these can extend change intervals to 10,000 or 15,000 miles."

Steve Ritter, senior editor of *Chemical & Engineering News*, writes, "Conventional wisdom has held that the oil should be changed about every 3,000 miles. This notion has been ingrained into people's heads for decades, in part as a marketing ploy by oil companies. The 3,000-mile interval made sense when engines used single-grade nondetergent oils. But with the latest oils and car designs, it's no longer necessary to change oil that often under normal driving conditions."

Concerned about the effects of used oil on the environment and responding to research that indicates 73 percent of

California drivers change motor oil more often than their vehicle's manufacturer recommends, the California Environmental Protection Agency and its Integrated Waste Management Board (CIWMB) have emerged as another strong opponent of the 3,000-mile oil change. The group recently launched a public information program and website (www.3000mylemyth.org) designed to "bust the 3,000-mile myth" and encourage drivers to reduce used oil volume by following the longer oil drain recommendations of vehicle manufacturers.

"Used motor oil poses a great risk to the environment," said CIWMB Chair Margo Reid Brown. "With better made cars and the rise of synthetic oils, the 3,000-mile standard is not always recommended."

Most recently, General Motors announced its support of the CIWMB program to educate drivers about oil change intervals. According to GM, standard 3,000-mile oil change recommendations are based on outdated engine and oil technology, and the company instead recommends changing oil based on its Oil Life System. Currently included on over 97 percent of all GM vehicles sold in the U.S., the GM Oil Life System typically allows drivers to extend drain intervals up to 10,000 miles through use of a computer-based software algorithm that measures vehicle operating conditions. With 31 million vehicles on the road equipped with the Oil Life System, GM spokesman Tom Henderson claims following its recommendations rather than the 3,000-mile rule could save 100 million gallons of oil annually.

In addition to the environmental benefits associated with less waste oil, extended drain intervals save consumers money. For example, customers who purchase conventional oil at \$3 or more per quart, drive 12,000 miles per year and follow 3,000-mile oil change recommendations spend at least \$60 per year on oil alone (assuming a five-quart sump capacity). AMSOIL customers who pay \$8.90 per quart under the same conditions pay only \$44.50 per year.

"When it comes to oil changes, less is more," claims the CIWMB. "You'll have more money in your wallet by changing your oil less, and fewer oil changes mean less oil that needs to be safely managed and recycled."

Premium AMSOIL synthetic motor oils offer the longest drain intervals on the market, unsurpassed protection and performance that effectively extends equipment life and improved fuel economy, saving customers money at the pump and reducing the nation's dependence on foreign oil.