

# ABAC NEWS

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2011

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*The Official Newsletter of the Auto Body Association of Connecticut*



## A Message from the desk of Bob Skrip Skrip's Auto Body - ABAC President

Well here we are again, the end of another year. I can only hope 2012 brings this industry more unity, more professionalism, more camaraderie between its colleagues, more knowledge of the ever-changing craft we call collision repair. Is that too much to ask for? I don't think it's unobtainable. In fact I believe it's somewhat necessary if you want to survive and prosper. If you were at any of the recent educational series seminars the ABAC conducted, you experienced a small taste of the new metals, bonding materials, Hybrid Technology and other dynamic changes in today's vehicles as well as some of the necessary support needed through the manufacturers to complete a successful repair. This is not the look of the future; this is the look of NOW. If you're not ready, I hope you're getting ready. I know it's a costly decision, but look at the alternative.

The ABAC has planned another blockbuster year with the commitment to continue with the OEM sponsored seminars. We already have two OEM's committed to sponsor and present information pertinent to their company. We are also currently communicating with I-Car for certification class info for ABAC Member shops. This is our commitment to you, our members, to assist you in keeping up to date with ongoing training. In this issue, pay attention to our new feature titled "In The Headlights" where we feature a newsworthy story that has something to do with the people of the industry, but not necessarily the industry. Does that make sense?? When you read this issue's "In The Headlights", you will understand.

The ABAC explored many media channels this year, the social giants, Facebook, Twitter, and the like, we participated in two business expos, one in Hartford, one in New Haven, (see pg# 10&11). At the New Haven Expo we introduced our new QR codes, where anyone can flash it with their smart phone and be directed to The

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ABAC web-site or Facebook page; A necessary tool for today's consumer when they need to find a shop in their area or just "friend us". (Well because that's what they do). Like I said before, this isn't the future, this is NOW. We decided to round out 2011 and bring in 2012 with a TV and Radio campaign. We are now going on Fox61 News at Ten, as well as Radio 104. Be looking and listening for The ABAC ads. We have developed text for the Radio, and purchased a TV spot that will be running through the winter driving months. This is a costly campaign, but will bring The ABAC and its members to new levels.

This newsletter goes to over 500 licensed repair shops and trade groups throughout Connecticut, and there are many shops that for one reason or another are not members of The ABAC. I would hope after reading this message, you will decide to join, come along for the ride. This upcoming year is packed with educational seminars, sales and marketing ideas, networking and all the tools needed to not just survive, but let's get together and prosper.

In closing, I am personally inviting all shops, DRP or independent, car or truck, to become a member in good standing of The ABAC. Get involved; come to a meeting as my guest. Come on; give me a call to find out how. Remember, we are in this TOGETHER.

**Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!**

**Bob Skrip - [indabodybiz@aol.com](mailto:indabodybiz@aol.com)**



## Education & Training Continues "Non-Stop" for the ABAC and its Members!

It was "standing room only" once again for the ABAC November Quarterly Meeting held at the Country House Restaurant in Foxon, Ct.

President Bob Skrip opened the meeting by thanking everyone for attending and their support. Skrip then read the Anti-Trust Disclaimer. He then thanked the meeting sponsors. They were:

- **BMW of Bridgeport**
- **Enterprise Rent-A-Car**
- **Matthew Forrest – Forrest Law**

Bob then thanked the yearly Corporate Sponsors of the ABAC:

**Platinum:**

- **BMW of Bridgeport**



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**Gold:**

- Albert Kemperle
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If anyone is interested in becoming a Corporate Sponsor of the ABAC, please contact ABAC Administrator Heather at [abacadmin.heather@gmail.com](mailto:abacadmin.heather@gmail.com) or you can contact any one of the Board of Directors listed on the back page of this newsletter.



Our first guest speaker was Matt Forrest from Forrest Law. Matt gave us a great in-depth presentation on Diminished Value. Forrest also gave us materials to get us up to speed on what the law is and brochures for follow-up. Matt's presentation was followed by an array of questions. Did you know: After an accident a fully repaired car has lost value because:

- Consumers place less value on a previously damaged car
- Repair shops are often unable to duplicate processes available only to manufacturers
- All damage, even minor, will show up on a car fax or vehicle history report

For more information contact <http://matthewforrestlaw.com>

Board of Director Bill Romaniello then took to the front to give us information on Social Media. *“There’s a big venue that a lot of us aren’t tapping into. Right now this meeting is being streamed live on Facebook for the Auto Body association.”* (Thanks to Chris Sheehy of Sidewalk Branding Co. for taking care of this for the ABAC!) Bill also covered Twitter, Smartphones, LinkedIn, Website content and the huge aspect of using these tools for your business. Bill then asked a few basic questions to attendees concerning their use and function of Social Media.



Our next guests for the evening were Nicholas Brown, BMW of America, Body & Paint Training Instructor and Walter Malec, BMW of America, Body & Paint Technical Training Manager. On this evening they covered:

- Who is BMW Training and Paint Department?
- Advanced Technologies
- Bonding and Riveting Technology
- Horizons of Upcoming Years



Each of these topics was covered in detail and this 60+ minute educational presentation was welcomed by all in attendance and was followed by a Q&A forum.

The ABAC is always on the cutting edge of providing their members with the best possible educational tools that can be found. Many thanks to BMW of Bridgeport for facilitating this program for us.

Bob Skrip then thanked everyone again for their support and commitment to the ABAC and wished everyone Happy Holidays for the upcoming season.

Submitted by Don Cushing

# Auto body shops say they, not insurers, should set costs

*By Adam Belz, USA TODAY*

Auto repair shops are stepping up their efforts against insurance companies, which they argue are controlling their prices by steering customers toward preferred businesses that do their bidding. Auto body trade groups are promoting bills in state legislatures from Massachusetts to Iowa to try to change the rules of the game.

At issue is who gets to decide prices for auto body repair — shops or insurance companies. Laws and prices vary by state, but repair shops say if they don't charge what insurance companies decide are fair prices, they lose business, sometimes to shops that use substandard parts.

Insurance company officials counter that they deal with thousands of vehicle repairs each year and figure out who can do the best work for the lowest cost. That, they say, saves money for consumers.

Some consumers disagree. About a year ago, Kris Weaver hit a deer with her red pickup. She says she took the vehicle to O'Mara Auto Body in Martensdale, Iowa, a company she had used and trusted. The truck needed a new bumper, license plate mounting, grille and air conditioning condenser. Tom O'Mara, the body shop owner, estimated repairs would cost \$1,330. When O'Mara sent the invoice to [AAA](#), the company reimbursed him \$1,187. That left Weaver with a \$143 out-of-pocket bill. "It was just a continual battle," said Weaver, adding she fought until the difference between the total cost and the coverage plus deductible was \$25. AAA is an association of clubs across the [U.S.](#), and policies vary by club, said Cindy Brough, a spokeswoman for AAA.

Three bills about auto insurance and repair prices were introduced in the [Iowa Legislature](#) this year, but none passed. They are expected to be introduced again, said Tom Stanberry, a lawyer who lobbies for the insurance industry.

In Massachusetts, auto body shops will back the Auto Body Labor Rate Bill in the 2012 state legislative session. The bill would establish a commission to set floors on repair rates at certified shops, said Peter Abdelmaseh, lobbyist for the state's Alliance of Automotive Service Providers.

Insurance companies say they must set price standards to keep a lid on costs and premiums and say they conduct detailed surveys to arrive at the rates they pay. In Iowa, regulators at the state's Insurance Division surveyed the largest auto insurance companies in the state this fall, including State Farm, Progressive, [Farm Bureau](#), American Family, Nationwide, Grinnell Mutual and Auto-Owners, at Republican Gov. [Terry Branstad](#)'s request.

In a Nov. 16 letter to Branstad, the regulators said they had found that insurance company rates in the state are reasonable. Iowa law requires rates to be reasonable but isn't specific on what that means.

State Farm, the nation's largest auto insurer, with 42 million policies and 18% of the market, regularly surveys repair shops online to determine prices for each market. Dick Luedke, spokesman for State Farm, said his company allows any repair shop to participate in the surveys.

Luedke acknowledges the hourly rate determination isn't always perfect and says State Farm will adjust it occasionally after discussing with shop owners, but generally the company stands by its rates. If a repair shop doesn't think the rates are fair, the business can still charge more.

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"He definitely can do that, but what we pay is the prevailing competitive price," Luedke said. "If he wants to collect the difference from the customer, he can, or he's free not to do the repair." Shop owners argue the system of preferred shops puts all auto body repair businesses in two categories — the haves and the have-nots. "The shops that sign onto these (networks) operate by fear," said Ron Reichen, owner of Precision Body and Paint in Beaverton, Ore. "Those shops see the insurance company as their customer, and not the person with the car."

Reichen said insurance companies save money by sending jobs to shops that use second-class auto parts. The insurance industry vigorously disagrees, saying it's not in insurers' interest to promote poor-quality repair shops.

"If you have a shop that you're having repeated complaints about, you don't send work there anymore," said Steve Morain, president of the Iowa Insurance Institute.

## Coming Soon...

The ABAC has some exciting educational meetings coming up in 2012. Here's just a sampling of what you can look forward to!

### March 2012 Meeting

**Place & Time: TBA**

**Guests: Chrysler Corporation**

**See what Mopar has planned for training and educating auto collision shops**

**Meeting Sponsor: Bald Hill Dodge-Chrysler-Jeep**

### May 2012 Meeting

**Place & Time: TBA**

**Guests: Kia Motors**

**Join us for some interesting information presented by one of the industry's fastest growing companies!**

**Meeting Sponsor: Columbia Kia**

# National Impaired Driving Prevention Month

By [MADD](#) | December 5, 2011

December has been designated National Impaired Prevention Month, a time to raise awareness about the consequences of driving under the influence of alcohol and drugs. In issuing his proclamation, President Obama asked all Americans to “recommit to preventing tragedy before it strikes by ensuring our family members and friends stay safe, sober, and drug-free on the road.

The month of December is one of the busiest on the nation’s roadways, and also one of the most dangerous, due to a high incidence of alcohol and drug-related traffic crashes. During December 2009, there were 753 people killed in traffic crashes that involved a drunk driver.

MADD has these tips to help ensure everyone’s safety this holiday season:

- Designate a sober driver before celebrations begin;
- Plan safe parties, including providing non-alcoholic drink options to guests and not serving alcohol the last hour of the gathering;
- Never serve alcohol to those under the age of 21;
- If you’ve been drinking, use a taxi, call a sober friend or family member, or use public transportation;
- If you see an impaired driver on the road, don’t hesitate to contact your local law enforcement;
- If you know someone who is about to drive or ride with a driver who is impaired, take the driver’s keys and help them make other arrangements to get to where they are going safely.

Remember, impaired driving crashes are 100% preventable. Do your part this holiday season by choosing not to drive impaired and help others do the same.

## New Technology Means More Distractions Behind the Wheel

It seems like every week there is a new gadget or application that better connects us to the Internet and the world around us, especially after the advent of the smartphone. Automakers are starting to design vehicles with people's penchant for connectivity in mind, developing in-car technologies that keep drivers constantly connected to their online world.

But being so plugged-in behind the wheel can be dangerous. Most states have some sort of ban on using cell phones while driving, including texting and hand-held use. Unfortunately, the threat of [car accidents](#) caused by distracted driving does not disappear with the elimination of hand-held cell phone use.

A recent consumer reports article, "[Connected Cars: A New Risk](#)," discusses the danger that several new in-car services pose. Car systems, such as Toyota's Entune system, will soon allow drivers to link their smart phones to their cars and display web information on a center stack screen. Drivers will also be able to browse onscreen results, check email, update their Facebook pages, send tweets, and text -- all while driving.

Meanwhile, systems already in cars, such as audio systems / iPod links and GPS navigation systems have become more and more complex, requiring drivers to take their eyes off the road for longer periods of time than are necessary. Consumer Reports mentions Audi's MMI, BMS's iDrive and Ford's MyFord Touch / MyLincoln Touch as some of the most complex in-

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car systems.

### Distracted Driving and Car Technology: Putting Lives at Risk

Shouldn't public safety outweigh the financial benefits of adding web and social media applications to a car's center stack? Already, distracted driving plays a role in 80 percent of auto accidents, according to a 2006 study by Virginia Tech.

"Every single time someone takes their focus off the road -- even if just for a moment -- they put their lives and the lives of others in danger," warns Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood. In-car technologies can be visual, manual or cognitive distractions -- all of which can lead to serious distracted driving accidents. In fact, many experts claim that cognitive distractions, or ones that take your mental attention off the road, are just as dangerous as those that take your eyes off the road or hands off the wheel.

We have come a long way since the day people were concerned that car radios would cause distracted driving accidents. The National Highway Traffic Administration (NHTSA) is currently evaluating in-car distractions, which could eventually lead to regulations. For now, we must rely on car manufacturers to think about our safety when developing in-car technology. BMW, for example, does not plan to include the new in-car technology and has started a public service announcement campaign against distracted driving.

We must also pledge to drive safely by keeping all of our senses and attention on the most important task: driving.

Distracted driving will continue to pose a risk to everyone on the road until greater effort is made to educate the public on its dangers and the legal consequences of distracted driving are strengthened to show the public that states are serious about reducing distracted driving. If you or a loved one has been injured by a driver whose attention was on technology and not the road, contact an experienced personal injury attorney.

## Check Your Lights and Wipers!

As the days get shorter, it's a bright idea to make sure your vehicle's lights and wipers are working properly so you can be seen by others and your visibility is not compromised, advises the Car Care Council.

"Lights and wipers play a critical role in safe driving, as the chance of an accident increases if you can't see or be seen," said Rich White, executive director, Car Care Council. "From the driver's seat you may not notice a light that isn't working, so inspect all of your car's lights and replace those that are out. Also, inspect and replace wiper blades so you can see clearly when wet weather hits."

Lights are normal wear items that require periodic inspection and replacement. The lighting system provides nighttime visibility; signals and alerts other drivers; and supplies light for viewing instruments and the vehicle's interior. In addition to replacing dimming, rapidly blinking and non-functioning lights, the following tips can help keep you safe:

Keep headlights, tail lights and signal lights clean. External dirt and debris can dim operational lights from being seen by others.

Make sure that your headlights are properly aimed. Misaimed headlights blind other drivers and reduce your ability to see the road.

Don't overdrive your headlights; you should be able to stop inside the illuminated area, otherwise you are creating a blind crash area in front of your vehicle.

If there is any doubt on whether or not your headlights should be on, turn them on. Lights not only help you see better in early twilight, they also make it easier for other drivers to see you.

The wiper system keeps excessive water, snow and dirt from building up on the windshield, maintaining clear visibility.

Many factors can accelerate the replacement interval of wipers, including operating conditions (winter conditions are tough on wiper blades), frequency of use, material and type of wipers and sunny weather. In fact, wiper blades can deteriorate faster and need more frequent replacement in desert states.



## In The Headlights

*“In The Headlights” is a new column that will appear in the ABAC News. This column will contain stories that pertain to our industry in various forms. We hope you enjoy this new feature!*

### **A Very Special Christmas for the Vitale Family** *North Haven Shop Owner becomes Unexpected Hero*

On August 15, 2011, insurance appraiser Mike Vitale was at North Haven Auto Body in No. Haven, Ct just doing his job...writing a collision repair estimate. What happened next changed his life and if not for the events that occurred, could have ended it!

As Mike left the building he suffered a massive heart attack and collapsed to the ground. Fortunately, an employee of Empire Paving who was paving the lot ran inside the auto body facility to call for help. North Haven shop owner and Past Fire Chief of the Bethany Fire Department, Bob McSherry immediately rushed to Vitale's aid and started performing CPR. Said McSherry, ***“He had no pulse and it looked pretty grim but performing CPR can increase the chance for survival.”*** Bob worked on Vitale for about 5 minutes before members of the North Haven Fire Department arrived. They were able to revive Mike with the second “shock” according to McSherry.

Said Vitale's brother in a letter to the editor of the North Haven Register, ***“My brother spent days in a coma, on life support, with a slim chance of recovering. We were told he would have significant neurological damage at the least, if he survived. Today he is doing well – no permanent damage whatsoever. Please learn CPR. It could save someone's life and you will become an unexpected hero!”***

The unexpected hero this day would be Bob McSherry who said, ***“In my 26 years as an EMT and after performing CPR well over 100 times, Mike Vitale is probably only the 3rd person or so that I've been able to talk to after a situation like this one.”***

Thanks to McSherry and his staff at North Haven Auto Body, the employee who called for help while working for Empire Paving; the members of the North Haven Fire Dept who shocked his heart back to life; and the outstanding work of the cardiac intensive care unit at Yale-New Haven Hospital Mike Vitale will be able to have plenty to talk about as he and his family gather for the Christmas Holiday.

***Merry Christmas to Mike and his family and to all the unexpected heroes!***

(P.S. All of the employees at North Haven Auto Body approached their owner expressing interest in CPR. After the first of the year McSherry is getting them all trained!)

***Submitted by Don Cushing***

## Collision section registration increases for 2011 SEMA Show, RDE

The Society of Collision Repair Specialists (SCRS) on Monday announced year-to-date registration for its Repairer Driven Education (RDE) series during the 2011 SEMA Show has exceeded 2010 registration numbers by 59 percent.

The Collision Repair & Refinish (CR&R) section of the SEMA Show has also grown overall, according to the SCRS. Square footage of the CR&R section is up 15 percent over 2010. And the number of exhibitors in the section increased 27 percent from year-to-date figures in 2010, surpassing the 2010 total by 10 percent. In addition, registration of attendees who identify CR&R as their primary business interest is up 47 percent compared to 2010.

"The increased participation in this section of the show and our RDE program is a huge indication of the industry's excitement over being here in Las Vegas with us and the 120,000 other people who love the energy found only at the SEMA Show," said Aaron Schulenburg, executive director of the SCRS. "A bigger, growing, thriving section, with a noticeable increase in the footprint of the collision industry in the show means that we have done our part working with SEMA to make this an attractive environment for both exhibitors and attendees in our industry, ensuring that both have successful and inspirational shows."

"This year has a really great momentum behind it, and the energy is steadily building," said Peter MacGillivray, SEMA vice president of communications and events for SEMA. "SCRS has really brought tremendous relevance and intrigue to this section of the SEMA Show. We are thrilled to be a home for their Repairer Driven Education series, and to so many of the other collision industry meetings, activities and groups that have established themselves here thanks to our mutual interest in delivering the best experience possible to our attendees through our strategic partnership."

Source: [www.fenderbender.com](http://www.fenderbender.com)

## SEMA Show 2010: SCRS Repairer Driven Education to be offered at future SEMA shows

The Society of Collision Repair Specialists' (SCRS) Repairer Driven Education will continue to be offered at the Specialty Equipment Market Association (SEMA) show in future years after the success of last week's inaugural session at SEMA.

"We've built a tremendous foundational relationship with SEMA," said Aaron Schulenburg, executive director of the SCRS. "This is a long-standing relationship from our perspective, and SEMA has indicated the same back to us." The SCRS Repairer Driven Education debuted at SEMA 2010 last week in Las Vegas. Schulenburg says 21 educational seminars were offered, led by more than 20 course instructors. Registrants were able to attend six different courses.

"We offered courses on what we felt were the most relevant industry topics that got to the core of what repairers need the most today," Schulenburg said. The SCRS wanted to make sure the courses offered would inspire people to look at their organizations from a different perspective, and advance the way that shop owners run their businesses.

Attendance numbers for the Repairer Driven Education have not yet been released. "Overall, this was a tremendous success," Schulenburg said, "and one that will carry us strongly into next year's event." Schulenburg says the SEMA management has invited the SCRS to be more involved with the Paint, Body and Equipment (PB&E) sector of the show in 2011 to "make sure that the show and the education offered delivers exactly what the industry is looking for." "The PB&E section was large this year, with everything you could have wanted in the collision section," Schulenburg said. "Next year is going to be significantly larger. The industry will be blown away by what they see."

Source: [www.fenderbender.com](http://www.fenderbender.com)



## ABAC Appears at the Greater New Haven Business Expo

As we have done in the past, the Auto Body Association of Connecticut staffed a consumer awareness booth at the Greater New Haven Chamber of Commerce Business Expo held at the Toyota Oakdale Theater in Wallingford this November. During the Business Expo, we had the privilege to meet and speak with hundreds of local visitors and CT businesses to educate them on their right to choose their own repair shop.

“What surprised most of us, was when we started saying “In Connecticut, the law is clear, it’s your car – it’s your. . .” and the person we’re talking with would end our sentence with “**choice**”; typically followed with “yea I know that – doesn’t everybody?” says ABAC President Bob Skrip.

“CT motorists are clearly hearing the message of **choice** – no doubt through the success of our social media marketing channels” adds Tony Ferraiolo.

And speaking of marketing, Chris Sheehy from <http://SidewalkBranding.Co> had put together some QR codes for us to use – made just for this event. We had these QR codes on our brochures and on a custom sign placed right on our tabletop. While not recognizable by all consumers {yet}, there were several visitors who clicked on the code to join our Facebook page – **right from the Expo floor!** “Using QR codes are a great way to bridge people reading ABAC’s paper material (like brochures and flyers) to our digital online marketing channels – like Facebook” says Sheehy. And that’s exactly what happened too.



Follow ABAC on Facebook



SidewalkBranding.Co on Facebook

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Additionally, news of ABAC's recent information town-hall-meetings with Ford, General Motors, and most recently BMW impressed everyone. The dedication from an automotive repair body towards continuous improvement absolutely gained consumer confidence of the value ABAC brings its members and of the value it brings to the customers of fellow ABAC shops.

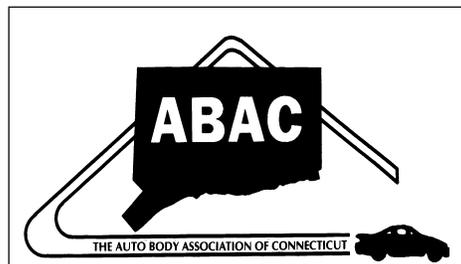
These Expo events have been a great way to let Connecticut motorists know of our organization and all that ABAC and its members do to keep Connecticut consumers informed and safe when it comes to repair laws and motoring. We are sure to continue attending these through the new year.



**Mike Wilkowski (R) meets with State Representative Ezequiel Santiago**



**ABAC Officers: (L-R) President Bob Skrip, Vice President Tony Ferraiolo, Treasurer Mike Wilkowski meet and educate people at the Business Expo**



## ABAC OFFICERS 2011

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*The goal of the ABAC News is to provide a forum for the free expression of ideas. The opinions and ideas appearing in this publication are not necessarily representations of the ABAC and should not be construed as legal advice.*



# Give the Gift of Safety to Your Favorite Drivers

It's gift-giving crunch time so if you're still struggling with what to give a loved one, family member or friend this holiday season, the perfect present may be related to vehicle safety. Tire pressure gauges, ice scrapers, emergency kits, windshield wipers or the Car Care Guide, published by the non-profit Car Care Council, are ideal for any drivers on your list.

"These small and relatively inexpensive items play a big role in vehicle safety and reliability especially during winter driving when road conditions can be hazardous and unpredictable," said Rich White, executive director, Car Care Council. "They're perfect stocking stuffers or holiday gifts that show the drivers on your list that you truly care about their safety this holiday season."

Low tire pressure and windshield wipers were among the top items with the highest failure rates during community car care vehicle checks last year. Tire pressure should be checked at least once a month as properly inflated tires are critical to the vehicle's ride, handling, traction and safety. For optimum performance, wiper blades should be replaced every six months or when cracked, cut, torn, streaking or chattering.

An emergency road kit is something that can be easily compiled or purchased. A kit should include an ice scraper and snowbrush, jumper cables, flashlight, flares, blanket, candles/matches, bottled water and dry food snacks.

The council's Car Care Guide is a glove-box size consumer booklet that presents automotive maintenance and repair in everyday language. Single copies of the guide are available at no cost on the Car Care Council website at: [www.carcare.org/car-care-guide](http://www.carcare.org/car-care-guide).

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