



WARNING LIGHTS.. NUISANCE OR NECESSITY?

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Today's vehicles offer an array of instrument cluster indicators that will challenge even the savviest of drivers. These range from check oil level warnings, ABS, tire pressure, and traction lights. The vehicle manufacturers have left no stone unturned in their quest to keep the consumer notified on the condition of their vehicles "State of Health".

During my years working in the repair field I would often hear a customer say "this or that light is on...is it important?" At first you might think well that's an easy one, they're ALL important are they not? Learning how to respond to that question with tact has always been the challenge of many Service Writers or Managers. I have seen perfectly running cars towed into the shop for nothing more than an indicator light on, because the individual who spoke to the customer on the phone did not take the time to determine if a true safety issue existed.

The flip side of the story is the customer who truly ignores every indicator on the dash. These warnings that go unchecked typically snowball into a monstrous repair bill. "Check Engine" is one of the most common lights. Over the years customers have come up with unique ways of dealing with that "pesky light". Some would cover it up with black tape while others just piled enough junk in front of it so they couldn't see it any more. Some will go as far as drilling a hole through the front of the cluster and into the bulb to pop it, anything so as not to deal with it. After all, the car "runs fine".

The challenge for the independent repair industry has been to educate the consumer. Explaining the reason for the Check Engine light and how its role has changed over the years. The criteria used to turn the light on today are completely different than those used with the first generation of On Board Diagnostics (OBD). It only turned the check engine light on when a component or system had failed. Today's PCM has the ability to recognize degradation and when that break down in a component or system may be causing the tail pipe emissions to increase beyond 1.5 times the FTP. I found that when I would tell my customer that the computer was trying to alert them that their vehicle may be polluting, they were much more likely to allow me to diagnose and in most cases repair their car.

Education in any market is always the key to growth. The question I raise here today is, *whose role is it to educate the driving public?* Can we depend on the vehicle manufacturer or the car salesman? Better yet, should we? To most of us the answer is obvious. Anyone who has a stake in the aftermarket business has automatically taken on the responsibility of educating the consumer at some level. Some of us may be better suited for this task than others, but everyone needs to recognize where there is a need and find a way to fill it. We at Magnaflow support ongoing training, have a tech-line to address all levels of our customers needs and provide in-field training on new technologies and our product line.

Cleaning up the environment...one converter at a time