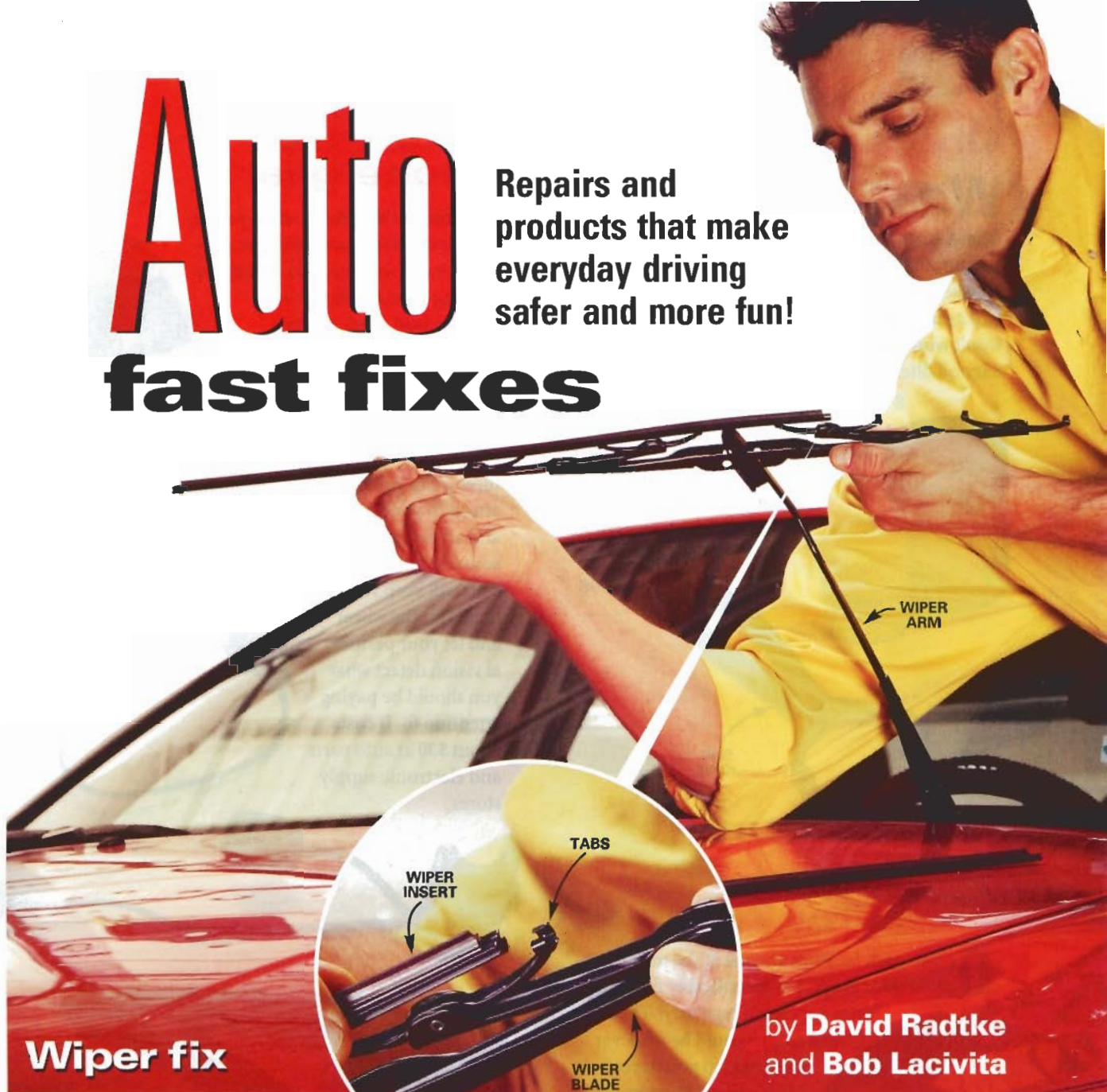


Auto fast fixes

Repairs and products that make everyday driving safer and more fun!



Wiper fix

by **David Radtke**
and **Bob Lacivita**

Even though windshield wipers are one of the most important pieces of car safety equipment, they often receive the least attention. We recommend replacing the blade inserts every six months. Replacement inserts are inexpensive and can be installed in minutes.

Don't confuse new wiper arms and blade replacements with inserts. Unless your wiper arms and blades are damaged or their joints are corroded, an inexpensive (\$3 to \$6) set of wiper inserts is all you need. Buy inserts the right length. (Check the booklet at the auto parts store carefully. Sometimes a left side blade is longer than the right or vice versa.) Then wash your windshield thoroughly. Dirt and grime are hard on the delicate rubber.

To replace the insert, pull the wiper arm back from the windshield. Lay a towel over your windshield at this point just in case you bump the arm, causing it to slam against the windshield. Look for a retaining clip at the base of your old insert and squeeze it together with a needle-nose pliers. While squeezing, slide the insert free of the blade tabs. Install new ones by sliding the insert through the arm tabs. A little dishwashing soap may make it easier. Don't force them—just gently push until you can lock the retaining clip into the guide tab. Check to make sure there's some play between the tabs and the insert.

More AUTO FAST FIXES >>



One size fits all

Where's that !@#%\$^&* oil filter wrench? I change the oil on all my vehicles, which range from a small four-cylinder import to a full-size pickup. This wrench fits 'em both and anything in between. It has a slip joint like an adjustable pliers and a cushioned grip that's easy to hold on to. It won't work in those really tight spots where an ordinary oil filter wrench is useless as well, so if you've got a really tough-to-get-at oil filter, drive to your dealer or quick-oil-change garage and let them have all the fun. Look for this wrench (about \$13) or get one online at www.toolguy.com for \$12.36 plus shipping.



SLIP JOINT

Ding-free doors

Do you park far from anyone at the mall to avoid door dings, but inexplicably find new ones appearing regularly? The careless culprit could be whoever parks next to you in your own garage! To stop this, put these stick-on hollow rubber bumpers onto the door edge of the other car. Just clean the surface of the door edge, peel back the adhesive strip cover and press it in place.

It may not be pretty, but it'll keep your car looking great! Tuff Guard door protectors are available at auto parts stores (about \$3). Call Trimbrite at (800) 248-7800 or visit www.trimbrite.com.

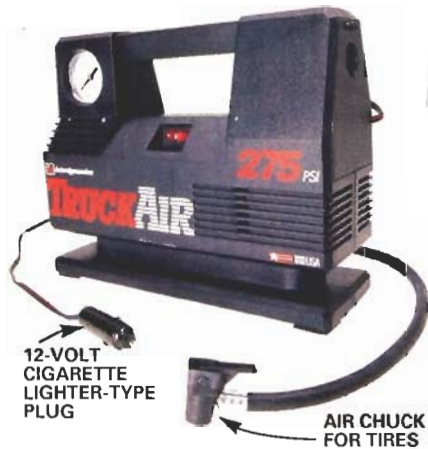


Hands-free phone gear

Talking on the phone while you're driving is not something we condone, but if you must, do it safely by keeping your hands free and on the wheel. That makes this activity more like talking to a passenger in the car (well, sort of). This unit plugs into the base of your phone and features a clip you can attach to your collar and an earpiece that fits securely into your ear. This will keep your hands on the wheel and let your peripheral vision detect what you should be paying attention to. It costs about \$30 at auto parts and electronic supply stores.



More AUTO FAST FIXES >>



12-VOLT CIGARETTE LIGHTER-TYPE PLUG

AIR CHUCK FOR TIRES

Air on demand

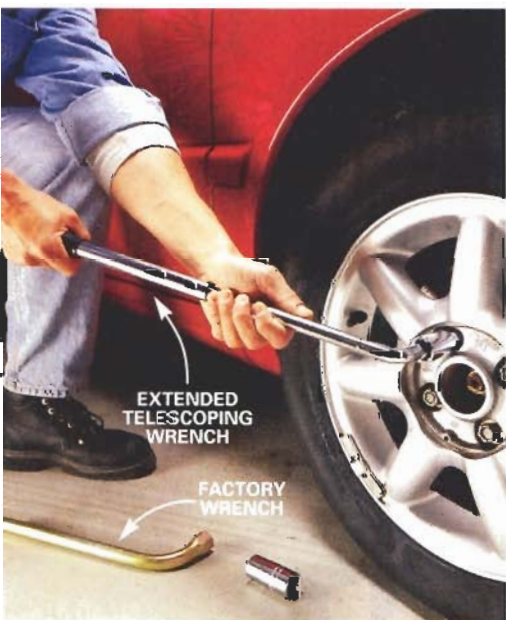
As time goes on, it becomes more and more of a hassle to check your tires' air pressure. Gas stations often have permanent "Out of Order" signs on their compressors or want you to deposit a quarter and supply your own pressure gauge.

Now you can carry your own compact compressor with a built-in pressure gauge! It's lightweight and easily hides in your trunk until you need it. If you haul bikes on your car rack, you'll love the convenience of pumping bike tires to the right pressure. You can find this unit (about \$45) or other units at your auto parts store, or contact Interdynamics Inc. at (718) 499-0608 or www.id-usa.com.



Wrench with muscle

I'm a big guy, over 200 lbs., and the last time I had to fix a flat, I had to lean with all my weight to jerk loose the lug nuts to remove my wheel. So this telescoping tire wrench is now part of my jack kit. Factory wrenches are often just too short to provide the necessary leverage to free a stuck lug nut. This nifty wrench is telescoping, so it'll most likely fit into your jack compartment and then expand to give you lots of extra torque. It has four socket ends to fit nearly any passenger car, SUV or pickup. At \$12, it's well worth the investment. If you don't find it in your auto parts store, call Alltrade at (800) 423-3598 to locate a dealer near you.



EXTENDED TELESCOPING WRENCH

FACTORY WRENCH

More **AUTO FAST FIXES** >>

**OUR SPARK PLUG IS
CELEBRATING ITS 100TH
ANNIVERSARY, BUT
YOU GET THE GIFTS.**



Maybe it's not your anniversary, but you still have reason to celebrate. We're commemorating a century of Bosch spark plug innovation with all sorts of exciting giveaways, promotions and sweepstakes. So put on your party hat and log onto www.boschusa.com. Because during our 100 year anniversary, we have lots of ways for you to celebrate.



BOSCH

100 Years of Sparking Innovation

©2002 Robert Bosch Corporation.



Auto Fast Fixes

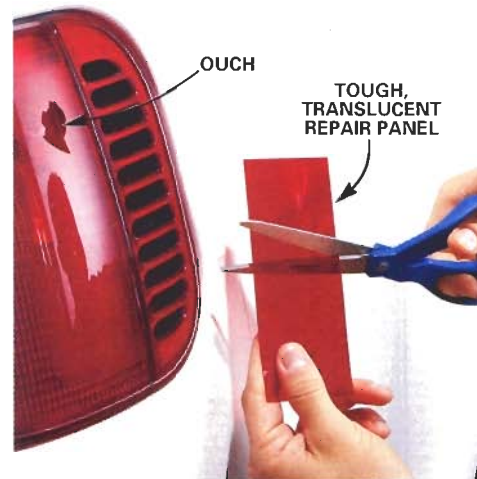
Nearly invisible taillight fix

A friend of mine recently got a chunk knocked out of his taillight lens by a flying rock. He went to the body shop to order a new lens and nearly dropped to the floor when he learned it would cost \$125 just for the lens. That's when we went to the auto parts store and found FIX A LENS for only \$6. (It's also available on-line at www.autobarn.net.) You can buy this repair kit in three shades (frosted, amber and red) for any light on your car. This plastic repair is heavy duty, not like the cheap colored tape you see on most damaged lenses. This stuff will bend around curves and survive even the toughest of car washes. On a car that's paid for, I'd call it a permanent repair!

Note: Some states require yearly inspections and the replacement of broken lenses.

To make the fix:

- Clean the lens surrounding the damage.
- Cut the plastic lens repair panel about 1/2 in. larger than the damaged area.
- Cut a piece of prismatic adhesive-backed lens texture, making it about 1/4 in. smaller than the patch. Press it to the backside of the colored plastic lens.
- Apply the special adhesive strips to the perimeter of the patch and press it over the damaged area.



More AUTO FAST FIXES →



Improve the air quality *inside* your car

Your car may be making you sick!

According to AllerDays, an information service that provides data on allergies and their causes, Americans spend a half billion dollars per year on allergy treatment alone. To alleviate discomfort, sufferers diligently clean their homes from top to bottom, but many forget to clean the other place they spend a great deal of time in—their cars. Our vehicles offer numerous damp, dark moist areas where mold and mildew not only survive but flourish. Cars can be a rolling warehouse of dust, spoiled food and human and animal dander as well as chemicals and fumes released from fabrics and other synthetic materials.

Here's where to look for these culprits and what you can do to eliminate them:



■ **Under the hood.** Dirt, dust and grime love to accumulate on top of the engine. Leaking engine oil and moisture from the cooling and air-conditioning systems attract and hold dust mold and other allergens. A clogged air-conditioning evapo-

rator can allow condensation and rainwater to accumulate and become a breeding ground for bacteria and fungi. Most people think turning on their air conditioner will protect them against exterior pollutants, but if the system is contaminated, it can compound the problem, especially if the recirculation switch is on.

These areas are tough to get at and thoroughly clean. If you detect a musty smell or other odor when you turn on the vents or air conditioning, take the car to your dealer and explain the problem. This job is too tough for the average do-it-yourselfer. Ask for an estimate, because some models are more expensive to clean than others. You may want to shop around a bit. The dealer or other mechanic can clean the evaporator case with special cleaners and clean the engine compartment to get rid of the grime and pollutants that accumulate under the hood. Also examine the cowl at the base of the windshield and remove any dead leaves, which hold moisture and mold. The cowl is an

intake for your car's ventilation system, so keeping this area clean will help improve the inside air quality.

■ **Inside the car.** Food particles, pet dander and fumes from vinyl, plastics and carpeting can accumulate here. Bad weatherstripping, rusty body panels or a bad windshield seal can let in moisture and cause water to accumulate in the carpeting and under mats.

If you or someone else in your family has allergies, never eat or smoke in your car. If your car contains food particles and pet dander, vacuum it thoroughly (use a HEPA filter in the garage or a regular vacuum outdoors). Get rid of old towels, newspapers, trash and whatever else you don't need inside your car. Wash the vinyl with detergent and water to remove dirt and grime and the thin film from off-gassing vinyl (two washings are recommended to reduce this problem). Take the floor mats out and wash them, then let them dry in the sun. Clean the carpets with a hot water



More AUTO FAST FIXES >>