



## March 2018 Newsletter

Greetings Fellow Mercedes-Benz Owners!

I hope you and your car are both doing well. For most of us, spring is in the air, so it's a great time to get out and clean winter's remnants off of your Mercedes-Benz and prepare it for its next battle...with pollen.

### TRIVIA

Last month's trivia question was, "How did 'Mercedes-Benz' get its name?" Well, it's an interesting story. The company was originally founded by two Germans, Karl Benz and Gottlieb Daimler. At about the same time, they both separately began developing vehicles based on gasoline powered internal combustion engines (as opposed the typical steam engines of the day). So it's obvious where the "Benz" part of the name came from, but what about "Mercedes"?

After Gottlieb Daimler's death, his partner, Wilhelm Maybach ran the company (I'll bet that name sounds familiar, too). He had been supplying cars to Emil Jellinek, an Austrian auto dealer who also raced. Jellinek often labelled his race cars with his daughter's name which was Mercedes. The Daimler company then created a series of cars called Mercedes, capitalizing on the name recognition of Jellinek's race cars.

When the two companies merged, they chose to use the name "Mercedes-Benz" for their cars. This was due to the name recognition of both brands, plus the fact that the Daimler brand name had been licensed to other manufacturers over the years, so this prevented any confusion. The parent company was eventually named Daimler-Benz AG (the "AG" is German for "Inc."). Later, during the merger with Chrysler, it became DaimlerChrysler AG, but was then changed to Daimler AG once Chrysler was sold off.

As a footnote, German pronunciation specifies that when you have a word with two vowels together, the first one is silent and the second is long. This means that Daimler is pronounced "Dime-ler" and Maybach is pronounced "My-bach". Just keep that in mind when talking about these cars.

### WASHING

Do we really need an article about washing the car? Sure, why not! The technology of maintaining and improving your car's finish has advanced greatly in recent years. The old days of using dish soap from mom's kitchen and her mop bucket are long behind us. There are many choices in car care products, and twice as many opinions on which is best, so just pick one that you like. The key to a good shine is more about *what* you do than the brand of products you use.

Believe it or not, the deepest shine has little to do with the wax. Wax is just a good sealant and can help fill in microscopic scratches, but the shine really starts with proper surface preparation. The first step is to wash the car to rid the finish of as much dirt and contaminants as possible. And while you do that, don't do any more damage. Use a clean wash mitt made from a non-scratching material like lamb's wool, microfiber, boar's hair, or soft cotton. Make sure to remove all tags and labels from the mitt and all watches and jewelry from yourself. If you drop any of your cleaning and washing cloths, don't use them again until they have been thoroughly washed.

Hard water can leave spots on your finish, but those will mostly be removed through polishing. Still, if you have very hard water, you should consider a water softener or de-ionizer. There are inexpensive inline filters you can buy that work well. Also, wash in the shade and dry quickly with a good chamois (real or synthetic). For hard water stains on glass, there are several products that will clean that off. One I like is Bon Ami. Do NOT use it on the finish, but it's perfectly safe for glass and really does a great job cleaning it.

Go over the surface one last time, and if there are any remaining visible contaminants, use a bug and tar remover to clean those off. Once the outer surfaces are clean and dry, use soft cloths to dry and clean inside the door jambs, trunk/hatch seals, and under the edges of the hood. Pay special attention to areas around seals and the water collector below the front windshield. Debris can get trapped in here and cause mold or even flooding. With a nicely washed and dried car, now the real work begins.

The next step is to use a clay bar. Clay will remove more contaminants left on the paint even after washing. It also removes layers of the old wax. Clay must be used with a lubricating cleaner. Many companies offer kits with a bar of clay and a spray bottle of waterless car wash or liquid wax. You spray a fine mist of cleaner fluid on the surface, then wipe the clay bar smoothly across the finish. It should glide, not drag over the paint finish. Be careful not to get the clay or cleaner on any rubber, plastic or unpainted surfaces. Any bits of clay left behind can be "blotted" up with the bar. If you drop the clay on the ground, it's best to dispose of it and use a fresh bar to prevent scratching the finish. After claying, use a soft cloth (cotton or microfiber) to wipe the remaining cleaner fluid and clay remnants from the finish.

Now you are ready for polishing. The best option is to use a random-orbital machine polisher, but hand polished is acceptable. The advantages of machine polishing is that it is easier on the elbows, plus it heats up the clear coat which helps smooth it out, mending small imperfections. There are various grades of polish. While you might be tempted to go for the strongest (courser) one, assuming it will do the most work, keep in mind that you would still need to "step down" to the finest level polish, so you won't really save any time. My advice is to start with a fine or medium level polish to begin with and see how that works. If you're not happy, then next time use a courser polish and step down to a finer one before waxing. Once the polishing is done, thoroughly clean the surface of any residual compound with a cotton or microfiber cloth.

Now follow with wax. Carnuba wax is worth the price and effort, but there are other waxes that are good as well. Choose one that you like and that is easy to remove. If you have a machine polisher, use it to apply the wax. Waxes react differently to your car's finish. Some will dry quickly, while others remain wet or gooey. You should wax the car in the shade when the paint surface is cool. Once the wax dries, remove it with a cotton cloth. You can try microfiber, but it tends to load up quickly and not release the captured wax, thus "dragging" on the surface. Cotton can be shaken to release the dried wax, so it may be a better choice.

You can use a stiff bristled brush to remove wax from crevices and edges. The last step is "setting" the wax. This is done by spraying a fine mist of water on the surface and wiping gently with a soft microfiber cloth. This removes any last bits of unbonded wax from the surface and smooths out the wax coating that remains on the finish. Now (finally) you can sit back and admire your work!

## **TRANSMISSION SERVICE**

While changing the oil and filter in your car's engine is something you probably won't forget to do, the same service on the transmission is commonly ignored. Just like the engine, the transmission contains oil and a filter. Engine oil performs the single function of lubricating the surfaces of its moving parts, where transmission oil does that plus is used as a pressurized hydraulic fluid to operate the internal moving parts. In addition to the filter, the transmission pan has magnets used to trap particulate and they need service, too.

Mercedes-Benz originally sold its 5-speed (722.6) automatic transmissions as "sealed for life", but when they began to see some failures at higher mileages, they advised dealers that a service at 70,000 miles was "acceptable". This was an unofficial "suggestion" as opposed to an actual maintenance schedule revision or service bulletin. When the 7-speed automatic transmission (722.9) was developed, it began to see a higher failure rate, even at lower mileages, so the service interval was officially designated as a one-time 40,000 fluid and filter change. A few years later,

that was revised to a service every 40,000 miles. Since the 5-speed and 7-speed are essentially similar (save for the different number of gears), it stands to reason that what's good for the 7-speed is good for the 5.

Changing the transmission fluid and filter is not a typical DIY (do-it-yourself) job like an oil change. To access the filter, the pan must be removed from the transmission, which requires a new gasket. The 7-speed also requires new bolts and a new overflow tube. A proper change means draining the torque converter, which is either done by rotating it to find its drain plug, or removing a cooling line to do a "flush". On top of that, the 7-speed does not have a dipstick and filler tube like the 5-speed, so it requires fluid to be pumped in underneath through the drain plug and its level is checked by the flow rate from the drain plug (with the car lifted, level, and the engine running). Like I said, probably it's not a DIY job for most owners.

Because of the cost of fluids, parts, and the labor involved, it's not inexpensive, but it is still an important part of properly maintaining your Mercedes-Benz. It really should be done every 40,000 miles. Most shops will charge around \$250 for servicing the 5-speed, but that's just a pan-drop and not a full flush. The 7-speed job is often closer to \$400, which should include draining the torque converter.

## **DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME**

This year, on Sunday, March 11th, we "spring forward" and lose an hour in order to put our clocks onto Daylight Savings Time. Most people will go through their homes and set their clocks ahead an hour before going to bed on Saturday night, March 10th. But what about your car? How you handle that depends on which radio head unit you have.

For those cars with the COMAND navigation unit, the time is set automatically from the same GPS satellite signals used to pinpoint your car's location on the map. Ironically, even though the GPS knows where you are, it does not translate that into the proper time zone, so you have to manually select it. And you also have to tell it whether daylight savings time is current or not.

There are many different versions of the COMAND system, but the basic function for choosing the time zone and enabling daylight savings time is the same. Generally, you go in to a "System" or "Service" menu, then choose the "Time" option. From there, you have to first set the time zone. Even if the time zone is properly selected, you still have to re-select and save it so you can advance to the next option where you choose whether daylight savings time is enabled or not.

Note that some older (pre-2005) COMAND systems have an "automatic" setting for DST. This should not be used as the dates when DST begins and ends have changed since those units were programmed. The newer COMAND units (those with

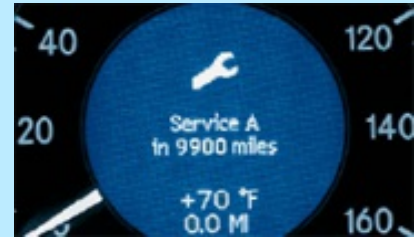
the "touch mouse" controller in the center console) have an automatic setting for DST that does have the proper dates programmed.

For vehicles without COMAND, the clock is set manually using the control buttons on the steering wheel and the screen on the instrument cluster. With the vehicle stopped and in park, use the "page" buttons to scroll to the "Settings" screen. Then use the up and down arrows to scroll to the "Set Time" screen. From there, use the +/- buttons to adjust the time.

#### TRIVIA QUESTION

*What is a rear fog light and how do I use it?*

*Send us your answers at [info@benzbits.com](mailto:info@benzbits.com). We'll announce the correct answer and "winners" in the next newsletter. There are no prizes, just recognition for the right answer!*



Thanks for reading! We hope you have enjoyed this month's topics.

Sincerely,

Benzbits

Got questions? Ideas for newsletter topic? Drop us a note - [info@benzbits.com](mailto:info@benzbits.com)

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