

# Car Care Event Protocol

## **Introduction**

The Car Care Event is a consumer education activity designed to increase public awareness about the benefits of good vehicle maintenance and repair. A well-maintained vehicle, as opposed to one that has been neglected, is safer, more dependable and more economical to operate. In addition, emissions are reduced, which improves air quality. Events typically take place in April during National Car Care Month or in October during Fall Car Care Month. The information outlined in this document is intended to provide insight into the tasks and resources required for a successful event and are based on DHEC staff experience.

## **Organizing an Event**

- Form a car care event committee.
- Have at least one person who is knowledgeable about cars (i.e., basic maintenance issues) on the committee. Split up tasks within the committee such as who will contact vendors, and sponsors, who will create brochures, who will contact the media, etc... according to the expertise of the person.
  1. Decide on the size of your event
    - a. An in-house check-up lane is ideal if you want to host an event on a small scale. The event is typically held at a repair facility. It builds a relationship between the repair facility and the community and provides the opportunity for one-on-one consumer education. It also allows you to conduct several vehicle checkups that an off-site event cannot offer, such as brake and under-car checks.
    - b. A medium-sized event generally takes place in a parking lot to allow ample space to have several check-up lanes. It may involve two to three repair facilities and requires more volunteers than a single check-up lane. It will likely draw more motorists, especially if the parking lot is located in close proximity to a popular business or in a high-traffic area with good visibility of the event.
    - c. Large “car care aware fairs” are usually held in parking lots and involve several businesses and several check-up lanes. A typical car care aware fair may involve automotive aftermarket companies, as well as people and businesses concerned with the environment and safety.

## **Setting a Date and Time**

Once you decide the size of your event, important consideration should be given to the time and date. April and October are the key months during which car care events usually take place. These months coincide with National Car Care Month and Fall Car Care Month. Car care events usually run from four to eight hours. When setting a time and date, keep the following in mind:

- Technicians and volunteers are key to making your event a success. Consult with those whom you plan to involve about their schedules, and determine a date based on when most are available. If there is a shortage of technicians available, consider bringing in students from your local automotive training facility (e.g., a technical college).
- Most communities have an online “Calendar of Events” that should be checked for any potential conflicts or opportunities. Your event could benefit from increased traffic due to

# Car Care Event Protocol

a community event, or the reverse could happen and turnout could be low. A lot depends on the nature of the community event.

## Volunteers

A check-up event requires technicians to do the inspections and many additional volunteers to welcome motorists and answer their questions. Volunteers are also needed the day of the event to coordinate any additional activities, such as displays and demonstrations.

Prior to the event, volunteers can help:

- Research the time, date and location.
- Determine the equipment that will be needed and assign operators for the equipment.
- Identify potential sponsors and help secure event sponsors.
- Identify and implement promotional opportunities.
- Decide the attire for volunteers (i.e., same color shirts, hats, etc.).
- Coordinate food and drink.
- Coordinate displays and demonstrations.

## Site Selection/Layout

If you have an off-site event, consider these five things:

1. **Convenience:** Find a site where people are accustomed to going: malls, downtown, banks, discount stores, car washes, drive-in restaurants or schools. Don't forget to get the owner's permission to hold your event on their property.
2. **Traffic:** Choose a highly visible site on a well-traveled road. Many motorists who are unaware of your event may pull in if they can see signage from the road. A changeable copy sign or marquee is an added bonus, if the owners let you change it. Develop signs for directing motorists into the car care event site.
3. **Space:** Think big when choosing a site. Provide ample parking for motorists, space for volunteers' vehicles, a waiting area for cars to line up to enter the check-up lanes, space for displays and booths and room for future event to grow.
4. **Power:** Decide early on how much electricity you need. Make certain everyone involved knows how much power is available. Otherwise, arrange for portable generators.
5. **Insurance Permits:** Investigate liability insurance early. The event may already be covered via a policy held by one of the sponsoring organizations and/or the host site. When other avenues fail, arrange special coverage. Contact the proper officials concerning needed permits.

## Sponsorships

Sponsors can help defray the costs of your event either through monetary donations or in-kind contributions. If you are seeking sponsors, here are a few things to decide before meeting with potential sponsors:

## Car Care Event Protocol

- How much money needs to be raised? Try to estimate the costs of holding your event. You may plan to rely on staff and volunteers, but there will be costs associated with promoting and advertising your event, as well as costs related to food, beverages, additional activities, giveaways, permits and insurance.
- How will sponsors benefit? Create different levels of sponsorship and the affiliated benefits. For example, a \$500 sponsorship might allow a company to have its logo on all print ads and included in radio spots, plus the opportunity to put a coupon in goodie bags to be handed out at the event. A \$100 sponsorship might only allow a company to add a coupon to the goodie bags.

The following are helpful tips for getting sponsors for your event:

- Start with businesses in the automotive parts and service industry. They will be most familiar with the industry and will directly benefit from participation. A local trade association may be a potential sponsor, as would businesses related to the industry. These would include car washes/detailers, automotive specialty shops, insurance companies and banks.
- Newspapers and radio and television stations often are willing to co-sponsor events. However, this is usually a trade-out rather than a financial sponsorship.
- If your event is held at a bank, mall or other business location, that entity should be considered a sponsor.
- If a business is not able to participate financially, they may instead be able to offer an in-kind contribution, such as food, beverages or other giveaways.

### **Outreach**

A large part of the event's success will be based on how many people come and get their vehicles checked. There are various ways to let people know about your event. Some are free and some involve costs. The public relations tools provided below can help create the buzz that has people talking before, during, and after your event.

#### ***Press Releases***

Press releases are brief articles (usually one page in length) that you send to a newspaper and that the newspaper runs on your behalf at no cost. Press releases should include the date, time and location of the event, as well as who is sponsoring it and who to contact for more information. Don't forget about smaller neighborhood papers.

#### ***Piggyback Ads***

If you have sponsors, they may be willing to include your event information in their ads. Businesses that use radio advertising may be willing to add your event information to their ads. You'll have the most success with piggyback ads by contacting businesses related to the automotive industry.

#### ***Inserts***

Many tire and parts dealers have regular inserts in newspapers. Ask these companies if they would include an event flier in their inserts as an in-kind contribution.

## **Car Care Event Protocol**

### ***Community Calendars***

Many newspapers feature community event calendars. It's usually just a matter of contacting the person in charge of the calendar to get listed.

### ***Radio***

Radio is a good way to help get the word out either through public service announcements or advertisements. Radio stations may also be willing to interview you or do a remote broadcast from your event. Remember that an overwhelming number of motorists attend car care events on the spur of the moment. They sometimes make their decision to attend while in their cars, making radio a great medium for this type of event.

### ***Public Service Announcements***

Public Service Announcements (PSAs) are a way of getting your event mentioned as part of a broader message to the public. This usually entails partnering with a nonprofit organization. For example, you might encourage motorists to bring a canned food item for the local food bank. This group may then be willing to publicize your event to its members at a meeting, on their website or via e-mail.

### ***Advertising***

There's usually a cost to radio advertising, much like newspapers. However, if the radio station is a sponsor, they may donate a certain amount of free commercial time.

### ***Interviews***

Radio stations often need people to interview. Once you've identified the best person to be your spokesperson, contact the radio station and offer your suggestions for an interview. You'll have more success with interviews if the topic you suggest has value to listeners, versus just a promotional message about your event.

### ***Remote Broadcasting***

You've hit a homerun if you can get a live broadcast at the site of your event. Contact the station manager concerning the feasibility of a live broadcast. Some businesses contract for a specific number of broadcasts each year. One of your sponsoring businesses may be willing to donate one of their remotes to your event.

### ***Flyers***

Make sure your flyer has all the pertinent information (date, location, time, sponsors, contact information, etc.). Place flyers in prominent locations within your business. Other local businesses may be willing to distribute your flyers, and don't forget to bring them to any meeting where there's an audience likely to attend your event.

### ***Television***

Although television advertising is usually too expensive, it might be available if the station were a sponsor. Your event could give this story the "local flavor" that the station is seeking. The greatest success with getting interviews will be to present ideas with consumer appeal, such as tips for safe driving during fall and winter conditions. Television stations may also have a community calendar that could include your event.

### ***Online Marketing***

Sending information about your event to customers through e-mail is easy, quick and inexpensive. The key is to make sure you have previously obtained their permission to receive e-mails from you or they may consider your e-mail as spam. It's also important to talk with

## **Car Care Event Protocol**

sponsors about their online marketing capabilities to identify additional opportunities to promote your event.

### **Jazzing Up Your Event**

A vehicle check-up event provides motorists with a free opportunity to have key safety items on their car looked at by professional technicians. But it shouldn't be all work and no play. There are fun, entertaining and educational activities that can be easily added to any event to make it a festive, memorable experience for motorists.

Here are a few favorite activities:

#### ***Display Tables with Bad Parts***

Nothing makes a greater impression about the importance of proper vehicle maintenance than being able to see and touch a faulty or worn car part. Consider displaying a dirty air filter, clogged PCV valves, a bald tire or worn out wiper blades. Label these items so motorists will know what they are looking at and the negative effect this bad part could have on a car.

#### ***Serve Food and Beverages***

Motorists will appreciate popcorn, hot dogs, coffee or other simple foods and beverages while they wait for their inspection.

#### ***Giveaways***

Balloons are a hit among children. You may also want to consider child-friendly activities, such as face painting or renting a bounce house. Motorists like giveaways, too, so don't forget promotional items from your business or sponsors.

#### ***Car Displays***

Invite the local car club to display their vehicles during your event.

#### ***The Odd Couple***

Display a badly neglected, average aged car alongside another in "mint" condition. The local bank's information could show the significantly higher retail value of the well-maintained vehicle.

#### ***Child Safety Seat Checks***

Ask a local safety prevention organization or group to be available to check the proper installation of child safety seats for motorists while they wait. Eighty percent of kids riding in safety seats are at risk because they are not buckled in correctly, therefore, a safety seat check-up can be a big draw.

#### ***Trade Fairs***

Invite industry suppliers, as well as local parts retailers to display their products at your event.

#### ***Car Wash***

Everyone likes a clean car. A local group may want to participate by washing cars to help raise funds for their cause.

#### ***Literature***

Many automotive companies are happy to send literature to be given away. Local businesses may be willing to provide literature, giveaways and discount coupons.

# Car Care Event Protocol

## *Non-Automotive Related Booths*

Insurance companies, banks or other companies related to cars might be interested in having a booth to display their products and services.

## **Photo Opportunities**

There are many reasons to document your event through photography. A local celebrity, the mayor, a prominent television or radio broadcaster, or someone related to your cause may own the first car through your check-up lane. Take plenty of photos of motorists, volunteers, children and others involved with or attending your event. Photos are a great addition to press releases, and can also be used on websites and in online marketing. They are also nice to include in your thank-you notes to sponsors and volunteers. Photos can become a powerful sales tool when seeking sponsors for subsequent car care events. Based on your organization's requirements, determine if a signed permission form is needed from individuals appearing in pictures taken at the event.

## **Post-Event Recommendations**

Congratulations! Your car care event is over and hopefully many motorists came by to have their vehicles checked. Give yourself a short break, but don't wait too long before taking care of a few post-event details:

- If you captured data from motorists, enter it into your database. The people who came by your event are all potential customers. You may wish to do a follow-up telephone call or e-mail to attendees thanking them for stopping by and offering to be their partner in car care awareness.
- Send thank-you notes to everyone involved in making your car care event a success. This includes volunteers, sponsors and anyone who helped promote your event. Don't overlook the owner of the site you used. A hand-written note will make people feel appreciated and will pave the way for their help with future events.
- If possible, have a follow-up meeting to evaluate your event and what worked and didn't work. Take a moment to jot down some key facts about your event. For example, the number of vehicles checked, the number of volunteers who helped, the activities and displays you included, etc. It's also helpful to note what you might do differently so you have this information for your next event.

**NOTE:** Sample press releases, fact sheets, images, and vehicle maintenance information can be found at The Car Care Council's website at: [www.carcare.org](http://www.carcare.org).

## Car Care Event Protocol

*Please see below for a sample timeline for a typical mid-sized event.*

Week	<b>Consider the following:</b>
<b>First Meeting: 12 weeks prior to event</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site selection/layout – choose a location that is convenient, allows for efficient traffic flow, and offers sufficient space</li> <li>• Services provided - provide checks for tailpipe emissions for O<sub>2</sub>, CO, CO<sub>2</sub>, NO<sub>x</sub>, HC, air/fuel ratio, air filter, tire pressure, and onboard diagnostic (OBD) scan if necessary, i.e. if a vehicle’s “check engine” light was on.</li> <li>• Numbers of vehicle check lanes – events typically have two check lanes and an additional lane open for cars to pass by. Consider including room for a pull-off lane for participants who require more time to spend with a technician. The line can get backed up quickly.</li> <li>• Number of vehicle technicians – try to obtain at least 2 technicians per lane.</li> <li>• Number of volunteers – needed to cover survey distribution, traffic flow, answer citizen questions, etc.</li> <li>• Signage - place event signage in areas visible to traffic and be prepared to weigh them down. A banner with the events name should be visible to passing traffic.</li> <li>• Displays - showcase related displays or activities of interest.</li> <li>• Provide tents, tables, and refreshments. The tents were large enough to enable vehicles to be inspected beneath them, which is helpful in hot sun or rain. The refreshments were for the volunteers only.</li> <li>• Supply air compressor –This service will increase the value of the event for participants. Over half of the vehicles at events need tire pressure adjustments in at least one tire.</li> <li>• Brainstorm on:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Sponsorships</li> <li>○ Promotions</li> <li>○ Displays/demonstrations</li> <li>○ Survey questions</li> <li>○ Refreshments</li> </ul> </li> <li>• *****AGREE ON DATE AND LOCATION*****</li> </ul>

## Car Care Event Protocol

<p><b>Weeks 1-3</b> <b>(9-12 weeks prior to event)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assign tasks among committee members</li> <li>• Meet with event location coordinator, look at site calendar, and sign any documents necessary to secure the site</li> <li>• Begin calling for sponsors to:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Provide promotional items</li> <li>○ Provide coupons and discounts for automotive services</li> <li>○ Provide displays on site</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Begin designing and writing:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Display boards and panels</li> <li>○ Flyers to promote event</li> <li>○ Brochures</li> <li>○ Survey questions</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Weeks 4-6</b> <b>(6-8 weeks prior to event)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begin writing:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Public Service Announcements</li> <li>○ Press releases</li> <li>○ Promotional clips for schools and other businesses</li> <li>○ Article for newsletters</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Contact by e-mail or phone:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Local schools to use newsletter and marquee to promote event</li> <li>○ Local auto repair shops to line up technicians for event</li> <li>○ Local agencies to advertise on websites</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>MAKE SURE LOGOS ARE PROVIDED TO INCLUDE ON ALL PRINTED MATERIALS</b></p>

## Car Care Event Protocol

<p><b>Weeks 7-9</b> (3-5 weeks prior to event)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure printing of any materials is still on time</li> <li>• Ensure sponsors are still going to provide any giveaway items, coupons, services, technicians, air compressor, OBD scan, tailpipe meter, brochures, etc.</li> <li>• Send interested schools and businesses flyers, news articles, and other materials</li> <li>• Send press releases to appropriate contacts, announcements for TV and radio spots</li> <li>• Make signs (and platform to hold them) that will promote event at location</li> <li>• Contact food vendors and drink sponsors</li> </ul>
<p><b>Weeks 10-12</b> (0-2 weeks prior to event)</p>	<p><b>** CALL SPONSORS TO REMIND THEM OF DATE, TIME, AND PLACE. **</b></p>
<p><b>Day of event</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arrive early: Set up cones, signs, tents, tables, and assign responsibilities of volunteers:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <u>Runners</u>-pick up food, drinks, keep the event moving, make sure participants are comfortable and can be used as needed</li> <li>○ <u>Surveyors</u>- distribute &amp; collect surveys from participants</li> <li>○ <u>Technician support</u>- help the technicians record information, keep the line moving, and help them as necessary</li> <li>○ <u>Greeters</u>- hand out “goodie” bags, ask the last two post-vehicle check questions, and take up the surveys</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Go over the purpose of the event with the technicians, example: This event is an awareness campaign; a well-maintained vehicle reduces air pollution, saves gas, and is safer, etc.</li> <li>• Create a checklist of things you may need- examples include: coolers, napkins, cups, utensils, tape, scissors, signs, camera, bricks or something to hold tents down, rope, pencils, clip boards, small boxes, survey sheets</li> </ul>

