



Car Care Articles

Rust: A Nasty Four Letter-Word

Henry Ford told buyers of his Model T they could select any color as long as it was black. Today we see cars in any of 7,000 hues, including shades of rust that won't appear on color chips in new car literature.

"Serious rust damage, including a hole right through the metal, can begin with a minor scratch in a parking lot from a shopping cart," says Marc Brazeau of Car Care Canada. "Steel is strong and lasts a lifetime when it's protected, but when that protection is invaded, the metal is exposed to the elements. That's when rust begins its invasion."



Cover paint chips as quickly as possible, Brazeau recommends. For a quick fix until you can get some touchup supplies, dab a little clear nail polish on the scratch. Touchup paint can be found for virtually every vehicle ever built, including antiques. Use the paint code number shown on the identification plate located on a door jamb, in the glove box, under the hood, in the trunk under the carpet next to the spare or wherever else the car maker has hidden it. The owner's manual will tell you how to find it.

"Some uncommon colors will have to be ordered where auto parts are sold or from the Internet. Also available are scratch repair kits including everything needed from preparation to finishing a deep scratch," Brazeau says.

Small dents can be fixed with paintless dent repair, a service found either through local automotive suppliers, the classified section of the phone book or on the Internet.

Like so many aspects of car care, preventive maintenance is much easier and beneficial than corrective measures. Maintaining the original integrity of the finish keeps the vehicle in "like new" condition.

The basic rules of body and paint maintenance apply:

- Avoid parking in the hot sun; it can damage interior surfaces as well as the exterior.
- Wash the vehicle frequently, including areas underneath, with mild, safe products.
- Select and use cleaners and waxes carefully. A cleaner that is effective for one type of finish could be disastrous for another. Consult the vehicle owner's manual to be sure.