The Dangers of Letting Your Car Sit for Long Periods

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So you’ve bought a new car, but haven’t gotten around to selling your old car, and you might not even know where to start (see our dangers of online classifieds) but procrastinating can be disastrous for your older car, and even a liability to you and your property.

You wouldn’t believe how many times a week we purchase vehicles from people whose car was in great shape physically and mechanically when, for one reason or another, they decided to let it sit for a while, as days turn into weeks and weeks turn into months they find themselves with a car that does not start, run, spews noxious fumes, and is simply not safe to drive.

Here are some problems that can and often do occur when letting your car sit for long periods of time.

REGISTRATION

There are laws and regulations in each state regarding unregistered vehicles on your property or on the street. Depending on the laws, your unregistered vehicle can spell huge headaches and even bigger fines.

We go in greater detail in our article of unregistered vehicles.

BATTERY

After long periods of inactivity you’ll often notice problems with the battery. A vehicle not running for just a week or two will often kill a battery. An older battery will die even faster. It’s good to disconnect the battery completely while, as days turn into weeks and weeks turn into months they find themselves with a car that does not start, run, spews noxious fumes, and is simply not safe to drive.

Once the battery is dead the car will not start and you will have trouble even moving it from one spot to the other, which could make emergencies where you need to move a car with little notice, impossible.

FLUIDS

If you’re going to keep your car from moving for long periods of time, you should drain fluids out of your car (antifreeze, motor oil, etc.) as days turn into weeks and weeks turn into months they find themselves with a car that does not start, run, spews noxious fumes, and is simply not safe to drive.

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FUEL PUMP

Fuel Pumps are another thing to quickly break down in a car that is just sitting around. Not letting certain fluids flow through components can cause them to malfunction and require replacing. A fuel pump is no exception.

A faulty fuel pump will cause a car to not start. It is very hard to determine if it is indeed a fuel pump that needs repair. Most times, a mechanic will have to actually replace it and test the car to see if it starts or not to determine if that is the problem and if it’s not, you will still have to pay for the parts and repair.

GAS TANK

One of the most expensive things to replace on your car, apart from the engine and transmission, is your gas tank, and it’s also one of the most common things that break down in an unused car. The damage often comes from rust that develops from exposed metal.

A rusted gas tank can leak gasoline, which can lead to disaster, and if left unnoticed, the contamination on the ground can, not only bring fines from the municipality, but can also prevent you from selling your house unless the contamination is properly dealt with.

Once the tank is rusted, the entire tank will need replacing, as well as the fuel pumps and other valves and pipes surrounding the gas tank.

In order to prevent this, your gas tank should be
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filled up to prevent rusting in the tank.
Just remember that gas goes bad, and you should pump the tank out, properly dispose of the fuel, and then refill the tank before you start your car after a long time of just sitting around.

FRAME RUST
Any vehicle that sits around for a prolonged period of time, is certain to develop rust in most, if not all metal parts. There are countless parts and components that can rust and can lead to costly replacements and repair.
Frame rust, the most costly of all rust problems, can determine whether your car belongs on the market or a junk yard. Unless your car is a high valued classic it’s not reasonable to repair frame rust.
Rust can lead to extreme corrosion which will lead to cracking in the frame, which is essentially an invisible death trap to drivers. There are even legal guidelines to selling a vehicle with frame corrosion issues, so make sure that you know the local laws (check your states guidelines).
If you sell a car in NJ with known frame corrosion, you can be held liable for an accident caused by that car, even if it happens months after the car was sold. This is a very serious issue and you should always have the car you’re selling, fully inspected by a mechanic and have the inspection recorded in writing, just in case you need it for future reference.

OIL
Oil is vital in the proper operation of your motor vehicle. Oil sitting too long in one spot is not good for the mechanical aspects of your automobile. Certain mechanisms must be lubricated and this only can take place when the car is running and operating at least twice a week.
Oil turns black when it sits too long, and this is indicator that the oil needs to be flushed and replaced before operating.

BRAKES AND ROTORS
Brakes and rotors will rust and go bad after a certain amount of time of inactivity. It is very dangerous to jump start the battery on a car that has been sitting and take it for a test drive.
You can tell the brakes have gone bad if you feel grinding when applying the brakes, and hear a high pitched squeaking noise.
A car that has been sitting idle for prolonged periods of time should be towed to a mechanic and the brakes and rotors should be replaced before attempting to place the car back on the road.

PLUGS
Plugs can go bad from sitting. You can usually tell, because the fuel mileage and engine performance will drop. The car may “stutter” and will not idle or run smoothly. If the plugs get bad enough, the car won’t be drivable at all.

INSECTS AND PESTS
Insects and other pests (spiders, snakes, etc) can invade and reside in a sitting car. When outdoor conditions are not to their liking pests and insects will seek the comfort of shade or some other enclosed space, often in urban areas, a car becomes the de facto solution.
I once purchased a vehicle that had been sitting under a tree for a long time and I did not look closely enough to realize the nest of spiders in the car. One day I sat down in the car, and realized that there were hundreds of little spiders in the dashboard. Getting rid of certain pests from your vehicles (spiders being one of them), is not as simple a task as it might sound.
I have heard stories of people in the industry buying cars infested with possums, rats, mice, roaches, and everything else you could possibly imagine. I know, it sounds funny, but try getting rid of something you normally want nothing to do with.
Aside from the fact that it is difficult to rid your vehicle of this problem, imagine driving on a highway and a possum crawls out from under the seat. This can startle you and cause a major accident and much worse.

CONCLUSION
Cars were built to be driven and not to be sitting. Countless things can go bad with them, and not all of them are preventable or repairable. If you purchase a new car, make it your first priority to sell the old one fast. Aside from the problems which I detailed, your car, even in pristine condition, is getting less and less valuable to the market as time passes; 99% of cars are depreciating in value. Add that to the problems that can occur from a car sitting a few months, and that can cost you big bucks.
As always be informed and be safe. When you’re ready to sell your car, give us a call for a free quote.

http://jerseycash4cars.com