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GM, California to Bust '3,000 Mile Myth'

By Nancy DeMarco

General Motors yesterday joined the California Environmental Protection Agency and its Integrated Waste Management Board in the state's "3,000 Mile Myth" campaign to educate drivers on reducing motor oil consumption by following their automakers' recommended oil drain intervals.

In response to research showing that 73 percent of California drivers change their oil more frequently than their vehicle manufacturers recommend, the Board has launched a new public information program to educate drivers to follow automaker guidelines for oil change frequency. The program, said the Board, is "designed to bust the 3,000-mile myth, the old mantra that drivers should change their oil every 3,000 miles."

Unnecessary oil changes, the Board said, generate millions of gallons of waste oil per year and have the potential to pollute the state's natural resources.

GM said yesterday that it will support the Board's program to help motorists understand how frequently they need to change their engine oil and the proper methods of doing so. "The traditional 3,000-mile oil change recommendation was based on engine and oil technologies of the past," GM said.

"General Motors and the California Integrated Waste Management Board share the common goal of reducing the amount of both new and used oil in order to help protect the environment," said Peter Lord, executive director of GM Service Operations.

"In California alone, more than 2.5 million GM vehicles are equipped with the GM Oil Life System," said Ron Strayhorn, regional service manager, GM's Western Region. "Owners of these vehicles can reduce the amount of oil they consume simply by following their GM Oil Life System, which for many drivers can be thousands of miles between changes as opposed to the old standard."

These 2.5 million vehicles will save 8 million gallons of oil a year if their drivers follow the Oil Life System rather than

following a 3,000-mile oil change interval, according to GM. With the Oil Life System, a computer-based software algorithm, vehicles typically need oil changes every 5,000 to 7,000 or even 10,000 miles, depending on operating conditions.

Nationally, there are 31 million GM vehicles with the Oil Life System, GM spokesman Tom Henderson told Lube Report. Following the System rather than a 3,000-mile drain interval could save 100 million gallons of oil annually.

Auto manufacturers today are calling for 5,000-mile to 15,000-mile drain intervals, Jon Myers, communications director for the Board, told Lube Report, "but quick lubes are still saying 3,000 miles, so we need to educate drivers."

Radio public service announcements are running in California now, Myers said, to convey the message that drivers need to check their auto manufacturers' recommendations. The Board has also set up a web site, www.3000milemyth.org, with consumer information to support the campaign.

The campaign urges motorists to check and follow their vehicle manufacturers' guidelines for oil changes, and also to consider using synthetic oils that will allow longer drain intervals.

Estimating that each driver in California drives about 15,000 miles per year, the Board noted that changing oil at 5,000 miles instead of 3,000 miles will reduce the amount of used oil generated by seven or eight quarts, keeping the oil from entering the waste stream and saving the driver about \$76 per year.

"When it comes to oil changes, less is more," said the Board. "You'll have more money in your wallet by changing your oil less, and fewer oil changes mean less oil that needs to be safely managed and recycled."

The Board, part of the California EPA, is based in Sacramento, Calif.