**Labor Day: Fire on Four Wheels**

*What to do in the case of a car fire as families travel for Labor Day.*

There’s nothing quite like cruising along an endless stretch of road on a summer day, headed to a fun destination. And for many, Labor Day is the perfect excuse to pack the car full of beach gear and take to the highway. So many people hit the highway, in fact, that this long weekend is notorious for traffic.

With more cars on the road and more time on the road, the risk of experiencing car problems and crashes increases. One potential car issue that isn’t often discussed is a vehicle fire. According to [the most recent data](https://www.usfa.fema.gov/data/statistics/) from the U.S. Fire Administration, there were 204,000 vehicle fires in 2016. The majority of these fires were due to equipment failures or unintentional events like crashes.

In the spirit of being prepared, we’ve compiled tips from [the National Fire Protection Association](https://www.nfpa.org/-/media/Files/Public-Education/Resources/Safety-tip-sheets/Car_Fire_Safety.ashx?la=en) and [State Farm](https://www.statefarm.com/simple-insights/auto-and-vehicles/car-fire-what-to-do-if-it-happens-to-you) for preventing and handling car fires.

Warning Signs:

* Fuel line malfunctions and split fuel pipes. These are major causes of vehicle fires.
* Oil change mishaps: Spilled oil left over under the hood or a missing cap to the oil filler.
* Fluid leaks: Most car fluids are flammable, so all it takes to ignite a fire is heat, electrical sparks and leaking fluids.
* Cracked or loose wiring and broken hoses.
* Rapid changes in fuel level, oil level or engine temperature.
* Loud sounds from the exhaust system.

If you spot a blown fuse, smell burning or notice other irregularities in running, see a mechanic immediately.

Preventing Car Fires:

* When transporting gasoline, keep windows open to allow air flow. Only transport a small amount in a certified gas can.
* Keep gas cans or propane away from passengers, tightly sealed and placed upright on a flat surface. They should never be transported in the passenger compartment.
* Drive safely and alertly to avoid an accident.
* A well-maintained car reduces the risk that it will catch fire, so take it to a professional for regular service.

It’s also important to recognize that car fires can occur in places other than the engine. They can occur under the vehicle, near wheels and brakes, and even inside your car.

Responding to Car Fires:

* If you see smoke or flames or smell burning plastic and rubber, act calmly and quickly to prevent injury or loss of life.
* Activate your turn signal and pull over to a safe location like a breakdown lane or rest stop.
* Turn off the engine immediately. This shuts off the fuel supply and therefore may prevent a full-blown fire from igniting.
* Get yourself and any other passengers out of the car. Never return to a burning car for anything.
* If you think there is a fire under the hood, do not open it. The influx of oxygen could worsen the situation.
* Move everyone at least 100 feet away from the car and well away from traffic.
* Do not attempt to extinguish a fire on your own. Call 911.

In summary, make sure your car runs smoothly before embarking on your long weekend. While some car fires are caused by collisions, they are more often caused by wiring, fuel system or other engine problems. This is why it is important to get your car serviced regularly and keep a vigilant eye out for red flags. And if you ever do encounter a car fire, stay calm, act quickly and call for help.

***Want to Do More to Help? Volunteer!***

The name of department is currently participating in the North Carolina Volunteer Workforce Solutions (VWS) initiative, a program dedicated to increasing the number of volunteer firefighters throughout the state. More than 70% of all fire personnel in North Carolina are volunteers, and the majority of fire departments throughout the state are experiencing a volunteer shortage. Local fire departments need volunteers of all skill levels and abilities, people willing and able to respond to emergencies whenever called.

“The skills and experience gained as a volunteer firefighter are invaluable and have a positive and lasting impact on the lives of others,” says Chief Mosley, “Those who join their local fire departments are signing up for one of the most rewarding opportunities they’ll ever have.”

To volunteer at your local fire department, visit [www.volunteerfirenc.org](http://www.volunteerfirenc.org) or text “firefighter” to 88799 to be kept up to date about the program.

To discover ways that you or your organization can help the campaign to recruit volunteer firefighters, visit [www.weneedfirefighters.org](http://www.weneedfirefighters.org).