

# **Auto Guide**

## **Spring/Summer 2026**



**FREE**

Supplement to the  
Tribune

## When will the North Cascades Highway reopen?



Photo courtesy WSDOT

Trimaxx Construction Inc. began emergency repairs May 13, at several areas of SR 20 between mileposts 142 and 148 where washouts during December's atmospheric river weather event caused significant damage.

The North Cascades Highway (SR 20) remains closed to all vehicles, bicycles, hikers and campers between Ross Dam Trailhead (near milepost 134) and Porcupine Creek (near milepost 156) due to significant winter storm damage. Damage includes multiple washouts and undermined roadway across several miles.

Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) expects to fully reopen SR 20 by Thursday, June 25.

Beginning May 5, 2026, work began on the first of two emergency repair contracts to reopen SR 20 as quickly

as it is safe to do so. The first project, which focused on slope stabilization and debris removal at the site of the rockslide near Diablo Lake (milepost 131) has completed work. This restores access to Diablo Lake Vista Point and Ross Dam Trailhead from the west side!

The second emergency contract began work May 13, 2026, and is focusing on rebuilding embankment, restoring more than 1,000 feet of undermined and collapsed roadway and shoulder and repairing damaged drainage, guardrail and concrete barrier along a 6-mile section of SR 20 between the Canyon

Creek Trailhead and Granite Creek vicinities (mileposts 142-148).

Contracts executed for this work include a 24/7 provision, as long as the work can be done safely. The first emergency contract has finished, but work is still occurring at the second site.

Bikers, hikers and campers are not allowed beyond the closure gates near mileposts 134 and 156. The closed section of highway includes damaged roadway and areas where the ground beneath the pavement has been washed away. These conditions aren't always visible from the surface.

## Did you know?

Although motorcycle ridership skews heavily toward men, women represent a rapidly growing segment of riders. Recent data from the Motorcycle Industry Council indicates approximately 19 to 20 percent of motorcycle owners in the United States are women. This is a significant jump from a few decades ago. The rising numbers are largely driven by Millennial and Gen X women. The mean age for women riders is 39, which is younger than the average age of 48 for men. Motoress®, a resource for woman motorcycle enthusiasts, found that women prefer cruisers and scooters as their rides of choice, followed by sport bikes. Fun and recreation, sense of freedom and access to nature are the main reasons women ride.

## SUVs and EVs take center stage at the New York International Auto Show



(Feature Impact) The 2026 New York International Auto Show is shining a spotlight on the latest in automotive innovation, from advanced technology to the growing shift toward electric vehicles. One automaker, Kia, is using the show to highlight two versatile SUVs designed to offer more space, capability and flexibility for modern drivers.

The all-new 2027 Kia Seltos has grown in size, offering a roomier interior with additional legroom, headroom and cargo space.

It also adds a hybrid powertrain, making it the only vehicle in its class with three powertrain options. The SUV comes packed with advanced safety features, a more capable all-wheel-drive system and premium interior touches, including dual 12.3-inch display screens and an available panoramic sunroof.

The automaker is also showcasing the all-electric EV3, a compact SUV designed to make electric vehicle ownership more practical. With an estimated

range of up to 320 miles, fast-charging capability and optional all-wheel drive, it balances performance, technology and everyday usability. Its intuitive features and flexible design make transitioning to electric simpler for a wider range of drivers.

Both models represent Kia's commitment to providing options that blend capability, innovation and style. To learn more, visit [Kia.com](https://kia.com).

Source: Kia Motors America

## How can you know if your vehicle has a recall?

(BPT) - If you don't know how to check for vehicle safety recalls, you're not alone. According to a survey by Stellantis, nearly half (43%) of American drivers don't know how to find out if their vehicle has an open safety recall. The good news is, it's easy to see if your vehicle has a recall. Visit the National Safety Council's [CheckToProtect.org](https://www.nsc.org/checktoprotect).

How does it work?

Check your vehicle by entering or uploading a photo of your license plate number

or the 17-character vehicle identification number (VIN) into the search tool. If your vehicle has a recall, contact an authorized dealership near you to schedule a free recall repair.

Just like getting regular oil changes, tire rotations and other essential vehicle maintenance, it's important to make sure your car or truck is recall-free.

This Vehicle Safety Recalls Week, March 2-8, 2026, is the perfect time to check your vehicle. All drivers should take this time to make sure their vehicle is safe for themselves and their passengers.

Why are vehicle recalls important?

Safety recalls are sometimes issued by an automaker when a part stops functioning properly as it ages, or when a group of vehicle owners experience a similar problem. Safety recalls can affect everything

from brakes and steering to batteries and airbags.

Research commissioned by automaker Stellantis found that 40% of drivers believe a recall is fine as long as it doesn't affect a vehicle's performance. The truth is that some recalls may not change the way a vehicle drives, but they can still present a safety risk. For example, if a recalled Takata airbag deploys in a crash, the airbag's inflator can break apart, sending shrapnel throughout the vehicle that could severely injure or kill vehicle occupants.

Another example relates to car seat anchors. CARFAX released new data showing that nearly one million vehicles have open safety recalls for child car seat anchors, a critical safety feature that secures car seats firmly in place.

According to CARFAX, as

See **RECALLS** on page 6

## The Luxury Letdown: Why features alone don't deliver

(Family Features) In a world where everyone is juggling busy schedules and endless choices, it's only natural to want more from your vehicle. Not just more features, but more comfort, more quality and more enjoyment every time you get behind the wheel.

According to recent survey data from Mazda, 74% of car buyers said special features are "very" or "extremely important," but 30% admitted they don't have any features worth showing off to friends or family. This is the "luxury letdown," the excitement of new features fades, leaving you wanting something more meaningful from your car.

People are looking for more than just bells and whistles. They want a car that feels good to drive, that is thoughtfully designed and that brings more joy and satisfaction to everyday life. It's not about having the most options or the flashiest tech. It's about all that and quality, comfort and a sense

of connection that lasts long after the new car smell fades.

### Beyond the Surface

Forget what you think you know about luxury vehicle features. The most memorable cars are typically built with an incredible attention to detail - a craftsmanship you can see and feel. Smart, thoughtful innovation makes driving better, not more complicated. From the shape of the seats to the way the materials feel under your fingertips, every detail is designed to enhance the experience. In fact, 80% of survey respondents said thoughtful design that makes the driving experience better is extremely or very important during the car-buying process. These subtle touches elevate the everyday and make a car feel truly special.

### The Joy of Driving, Reimagined

Driving should be more than a means to get from point A to point B. The most

rewarding vehicles are often those that make every journey feel intentional and enjoyable. Responsive handling, intuitive controls and a cabin designed for comfort can transform even the most routine commute into a moment of enjoyment. When a car is engineered to connect driver and road, it brings back the pleasure of driving many have forgotten. For some, this feeling gets lost beneath features and digital overload, but it's possible to rediscover harmony between driver and car - making every trip feel intentional and rewarding.

### Confidence Comes Standard

Safety is more than a feature - it's a foundation. Advanced safety technologies and strong crash-test ratings provide peace of mind for drivers and their families. With an industry-leading



number of Insurance Institute for Highway Safety Top Safety Pick+-awarded vehicles - including the Mazda3 Sedan and Hatchback, CX-30, CX-50, CX-50 Hybrid, CX-70, CX-70 PHEV, CX-90 and CX-90 PHEV - Mazda is committed to keeping safety at the forefront. Features like active safety systems, robust body structures and intelligent alerts help keep everyone protected, allowing drivers to focus on the road ahead.

### Value That Surprises

Many shoppers believe a premium experience comes with a premium price tag. However, value is found in vehicles that deliver quality, innovation and comfort without the luxury markup. The materials, craftsmanship and driving dynamics often surprise those who expect to pay more for such an experience. It's not just about what's included, but how it all comes together to create a sense of satisfaction and pride in ownership. The

result is a driving experience that feels special, accessible and built to last.

### A New Standard for Everyday Driving

In a world that constantly demands so much, there is a kind of more that stands out. Not just in features, but in the feeling, the craftsmanship and the sheer joy of driving. This is the more of Mazda - a more that is intentional, meaningful and designed to enrich every journey.

*Courtesy of Mazdausa.com.*

## Tackling auto insurance myths: Misconceptions drivers should know

(Family Features) Misinformation about auto insurance continues to circulate, leading many drivers to make decisions based on outdated or inaccurate assumptions.

"Even savvy drivers can be misled by insurance myths," said Justin Yoshizawa, director of product management at Mercury Insurance. "Understanding what coverage actually does - and doesn't - do can help people avoid unpleasant surprises after an accident."

To help consumers stay informed, Mercury Insurance is sharing this lineup of auto insurance misconceptions that can affect coverage, cost and peace of mind - and the

facts that stand in their place.

**Myth No. 1: You Can Negotiate Your Auto Insurance Premium**

**Fact:** Insurance rates aren't like haggling for a car price. They're calculated using approved rating formulas and risk models regulated by state insurance departments, so you can't negotiate a lower rate directly with your carrier. What you can do is shop for discounts, adjust coverage levels or improve your risk profile to influence your premium.

**Myth No. 2: You Don't Need Medical Payments Coverage if You Have Health Insurance**

**Fact:** Even if you carry health insurance, your auto

policy's medical payments or personal injury protection can still be valuable. These coverages may pay medical costs regardless of fault and can help cover expenses not covered by health insurance, including deductibles, co-pays, ambulance bills, lost wages and more, depending on state regulations.

**Myth No. 3: Full Coverage Means You're Covered for Everything**

**Fact:** "Full coverage" is a common shorthand used to describe a policy that includes liability, comprehensive and collision coverage. Even with all three, coverage is still subject to limits, deductibles and exclusions,

which means certain situations and expenses may not be covered unless additional protections are added.

**Myth No. 4: All Insurance Companies are Basically the Same**

**Fact:** Each insurer has different underwriting guidelines, risk models, discount structures, service levels and claims handling practices. Shopping only on price without comparing coverages and service reputation can lead to surprises when you need to file a claim.

**Myth No. 5: A Not-At-Fault Accident Won't Affect Your Rates**

**Fact:** Even if you weren't at fault, filing a claim can still

influence your insurance score and possibly affect future pricing depending on your state and your carrier's specific rating rules. Discuss the scenario with your agent before deciding whether or not to file.

**Myth No. 6: New Cars are Always More Expensive to Insure**

**Fact:** A new car often costs more to insure than an older one, but this isn't automatic.

A new vehicle with high-end safety features or strong crash-worthiness and theft-deterrent systems may be less expensive to insure than a different used model with poor safety ratings or costly repair costs.

**Myth No. 7: Insurance Automatically Pays for a Rental After an Accident**

**Fact:** Rental car reimbursement is an optional add-on.

*See MYTHS on page 4*

### Auto Guide

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# Why is the first year behind the wheel the most dangerous?

(Feature Impact) The driver's license photo may be slightly awkward, but the milestone is unforgettable. For families, a newly licensed teen means independence, busy schedules and a new set of responsibilities.

Motor vehicle crashes remain one of the leading causes of death for U.S. teens, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration shows drivers ages 16-19 are nearly three times more likely to be involved in a fatal crash than drivers 20 and older, per mile driven.

The statistics are serious, but they're also manageable.

"With the right preparation, teen driving doesn't have to feel overwhelming," said Susan Irace, manager, divisional claims at Mercury Insurance. "Experience is what young drivers are build-

ing. Parents can help shorten that learning curve with structure, technology and smart coverage decisions."

### Why the First Year Matters

Federal safety data shows crash risk is highest in a teen's first year of independent driving. Night driving, teen passengers and distracted driving increase that risk – while seat belts, graduated licensing laws and supervised practice significantly reduce it.

In 2023, more than 2,800 teens ages 13-19 were killed in motor vehicle crashes nationwide, according to the CDC. However, teen crash rates have declined over time thanks to safer vehicles, graduated driver licensing programs and greater awareness of distracted driving.

### Ways to Reduce Teen Driving Risk

The experts at Mercury Insurance encourage fami-

lies to focus on preparation rather than panic.

1. Coach Early and Often
  - Log supervised driving time in different conditions – highways, rain, nighttime
  - Create a simple written driving agreement outlining expectations
  - Limit teen passengers during the first year
  - Make seatbelts non-negotiable
2. Let Technology Help
  - Choose vehicles with safety features like automatic emergency braking and blind-spot monitoring
  - Use telematics or safe-driving feedback tools to reinforce good habits
  - Activate smartphone "Do Not Disturb While Driving" settings
3. Review Insurance Before the Keys Change Hands
  - \* Add teens to your insurance policy promptly
  - Revisit liability limits to protect family assets



Photos courtesy of Shutterstock

• Ask about good student and driver training discounts

"Insurance is about preparation, not fear," Irace said. "When families combine active coaching with the right coverage, they're setting their teen up for safer

miles ahead."

### Preparation Turns Risks into Confidence

The first solo drive is a milestone, but preparation determines what comes next. By pairing common-sense coaching with today's vehicle safety technology

and thoughtful insurance planning, families can support independence while managing risk responsibly.

For more teen driver safety tips and coverage guidance, visit [MercuryInsurance.com/resources](https://MercuryInsurance.com/resources).

Source: Mercury Insurance

## Is your child's car seat safe?



Data collected from prior seat checks in Washington State, shows nearly a 70% misuse rate of child restraints. It is important to keep your child safe while riding in the vehicle. An important service to help ensure their safety is obtaining a car seat check from a nationally certified child passenger safety (CPS) technician.

A CPS Technician will conduct a one-on-one meeting with you to help you feel confident you are able to install and adjust the child restraint correctly. It is not a pass or fail evaluation of how you are using your seat.

Before the Car Seat Checkup:

- Be prepared to learn. The technician is trained to teach

you to install and use your car seat properly in your vehicle.

- Know your child's current weight and height.
- Using the car seat instruction manual and the vehicle owner's manual, try to install the car seat into your vehicle prior to your appointment.

Tip! Check the index of your vehicle owner's manual for "child safety seats."

Be sure to bring the car seat instruction manual AND the vehicle owner's manual with you to your appointment.

If possible, bring your child with you as well as another caregiver to help while you are learning.

This one-on-one education typically takes 20-30 minutes, depending on your car seat

and vehicle. The technician will take all the time you need until you feel comfortable that your car seat is used and installed correctly.

Local Car Seat Checkup Locations:

- Snohomish Co. Fire Dist #4, 1525 Ave. D, Snohomish  
NEW LOCATION Summer 2026: 4th St. and Pine Ave. 360-568-2141
- Everett Fire Department, 2801 Oakes Ave., Everett, 25-257-8100
- Lake Stevens Police Department, 182 S. Lake Stevens Rd., Lake Stevens, 425-334-9537
- Monroe Police Department, 818 W. Main St., Monroe, 360-794-6300

## Myths Continued from page 3

Unless you specifically select rental reimbursement coverage, your auto policy won't pay for a temporary vehicle while yours is being repaired.

Myth No. 8: If Your Car is Totaled, Insurance Pays Off Your Loan or Lease

Fact: Car insurance settlement is based on the vehicle's actual cash value at the time of loss, not what you originally paid – meaning depreciation can leave you owing money on your loan or lease even after a total loss. Gap insurance is a separate optional coverage that can help cover the difference.



Photos courtesy of Shutterstock

"Dispelling myths is about more than just good information – it's about building insurance confidence,"

Yoshizawa said. "We want drivers to make choices based on reality, not rumor."

Source: Mercury Insurance

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## How to conserve fuel as prices rise at the pump

Fuel is a necessity for millions of drivers on the country's roadways. According to a recent report from Experian Automotive, approximately 1.4 percent of the 292.3 million cars and trucks on the road in the United States in 2024 were electric. Even though the number of EVs is rising, there are still plenty of people behind the wheels of gas-powered vehicles that require routine fill-ups.

As of late March 2026, the national average gas price in the United States was \$3.98 per gallon. When gas prices rise due to various factors, drivers are increasingly interested in ways to conserve fuel and stretch their dollars further. Here are some ways to mitigate rising gas prices.

- Reduce your speed. Driving at moderate speeds increases efficient consumption of fuel. Some vehicles may feature an "ECO" mode that optimizes fuel consumption by restricting

engine power, among other changes, or notifies the driver when they are driving in a manner that is using fuel wisely.

Driving above 50 miles per hour reduces fuel economy considerably. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, every five miles per hour motorists drive over 50 miles per hour is the equivalent of paying \$0.30 more per gallon of gas. That estimate is based on a gallon of gas costing \$4.32, but drivers can still conserve a considerable amount of fuel by slowing down.

- Practice smooth driving. Drivers should avoid aggressive starts (gunning it) and hard braking, which can eat into fuel efficiency. Letting off the accelerator early and coasting to red lights or stop signs helps.

- Rely on cruise control. Cruise control helps maintain a steady speed, which can save fuel on highway travel.

- Keep tires inflated. Properly inflating tires to the manufacturer's recommended PSI can improve fuel economy by roughly 0.6 percent to 3 percent for most drivers, offers the U.S. Department of Energy. Driving on tires that are 20 percent under-inflated can reduce fuel economy by as much as 10 percent. Removing unnecessary heavy items from the vehicle also can help to reduce drag.

- Limit idling and combine trips. Turn off the vehicle when stopped for more than a few minutes. When running errands, combine short trips to keep the engine warm, which is more efficient.

- Skip the premium fuel. Unless a vehicle owner's manual specifically recommends filling up with premium fuel, drivers will not see an increase in performance by choosing this more expensive option, offers Progressive Insurance. A person will just



be paying more for premium, which is always more expensive than standard 87-octane fuel.

- Avoid rooftop cargo. Rooftop cargo boxes might be a necessity when a car is packed with passengers. But these luxuries come at a steep cost. A study from the Oak Ridge

National Laboratory found that rooftop cargo boxes can reduce fuel efficiency by as much as 17 percent on the highway and as much as 25 percent on interstates where drivers drive at speeds between 65 and 75 miles per hour. The DOE reports that rear-mount cargo boxes are

much more efficient, so drivers looking to conserve fuel may want to pack light and/or opt for rear-mount cargo boxes instead of rooftop boxes.

Drivers can use various strategies to conserve fuel when gas becomes more expensive.

## Tips for purchasing a vehicle

(Family Features) • Make Sure the Purchase Fits Within Your Budget

Data from Kelley Blue Book and Cox Automotive suggests average used car prices are around 50% less than new vehicle prices. Trusted used car companies and dealerships often feature a wide selection of inventory, including different makes and models, so customers can select a vehicle that excites them and fits within their budget.

"While there are several considerations to keep in mind when shopping for a vehicle, consumers should never exceed their budget," said Laura D. Adams, personal finance expert, host of the "Money Girl" podcast and a paid Enterprise Car Sales spokesperson. "A vehicle that is near new is often an excellent sweet spot for consumers looking for quality without wanting to make the leap to purchase an expensive, new vehicle."

Searching for a vehicle with a retailer you trust can help make it easy to stay within your budget. For example, with Enterprise Car Sales, the price listed is the price you'll pay.

- Keep the Monthly Payment Low

The more you can invest in the down payment on a vehicle, the lower your monthly

cost will typically be and the less interest you will typically pay over the length of the loan. This can lead to lower, more manageable monthly payments.

"In setting a budget for a quality used vehicle, it's important to consider the initial down payment, the monthly payments, and the interest," Adams said. "When consumers can put a little more toward the initial down payment, while staying within budget, they often thank themselves later when they have lower monthly payments and less interest accrued."

There are many online resources that can help consumers make this calculation. For example, an auto loan calculator can show you how a down payment can affect interest charges.

- Purchase a Reliable Vehicle

No matter who you buy from, ensuring you are purchasing a high-quality, reliable vehicle is of the utmost importance. Do your research before signing on the dotted line and conduct a test drive if you can.

"When conducting your search, it's important to put companies and dealerships you trust at the top of your



list," Adams said. "Maintenance costs can sometimes creep up down the road, so it's important to make this significant purchase from a company or dealership you trust."

Some dealers also provide additional benefits to help protect a purchase. For example, all vehicles purchased through Enterprise Car Sales are "Enterprise Certified," pass a rigorous inspection by ASE-certified technicians and come with a 12-month or 12,000-mile limited powertrain warranty (whichever occurs first), 12 months of roadside assistance and a 7-day or 1,000-mile (whichever occurs first) buyback policy.

With a little research and careful planning, you can find a reliable used vehicle that excites you. Visit [enterprisecarsales.com](http://enterprisecarsales.com) for more information.

Source: Enterprise Car Sales

## Proper steps to check your tire pressure

(Family Features) Changing temperatures and prepping for road trips are good reminders to check tire pressure, but the reality is, vehicle owners should make it a habit to practice tire safety monthly. Even if tires may appear normal, they're one of the most important elements of a car, making it critical to perform routine maintenance.

Here's how you can check tire pressure on your own:

- Locate a tire pressure gauge, whether it's one you find in your garage, borrow from a neighbor or purchase at a local auto parts store.

- Check pressure in the morning before the car has been used or let it cool down for a few hours after use. Friction from driving causes tires to warm up, affecting air pressure.



Photo courtesy of Shutterstock

- Remove the cap from each tire's air valve stem. Place them in a safe location where you can't lose them.

- Press the gauge down on the stem of the tire for a few seconds, and don't fret when you hear the air hiss - it's normal.

- Check the reading on the air pressure gauge and compare

it to the recommended level, which can typically be found on a sticker inside your driver's side door or in the owner's manual.

- Inflate the tires, as necessary, then replace the air valve caps on each tire.

Find more ways to care for your ride at [eLivingtoday.com](http://eLivingtoday.com)

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# Don't let a cracked windshield derail summer travel plans

(NewsUSA) - With summer in full swing, safety on the road should be a top priority. Auto Glass Now encourages drivers across the country get road-trip ready — because wherever the season takes them, a damaged windshield shouldn't stand in the way.

Summer means more time behind the wheel — and cracked windshields often tag along for the ride.

• **Why You Shouldn't Hit the Road with a Damaged Windshield**

Planning a road trip this summer? Before you pack the cooler and load up the car, make sure your windshield is ready for the journey too.

That small chip or crack you've been putting off could turn into a much bigger problem once the temperatures rise.

Summer heat can worsen existing windshield damage. As glass expands in the heat — especially under direct sunlight — minor chips can rapidly turn into large cracks. Add in high interior temperatures and sudden cooling from air conditioning, and the risk of further damage increases. In some cases, a minor chip can quickly grow into a full crack, potentially compromising your visibility and safety.

Here are a few risks to consider:

• **Thermal Stress:** The combination of a hot windshield and a blast of cold AC can trigger cracking.

• **Rough Roads and road vibrations:** Potholes, gravel roads, speed bumps, and uneven pavement transmit strong vibrations and shocks to the vehicle chassis. These impacts travel through the frame and can stress the windshield, especially if there's a crack already present.

• **Safety Compromise:** A cracked windshield can compromise a vehicle's structure, especially in rollover accidents.

• **Why Now Is the Time to Repair a Windshield**

Taking care of a damaged windshield before hitting the road isn't just safer — it's smarter. What could be a quick repair now might turn into a full replacement if left untreated in summer conditions. That's why taking care of it before your road trip is key.

Summer road trips should be about fun and adventure — not anxiety about whether a windshield will hold up under pressure and heat. From winding mountain drives to scenic coastal highways, a clear, undamaged windshield provides peace of mind and improved safety for every mile.

Auto Glass Now encourages drivers not to delay when it comes to repairs. That small crack could turn into a vacation spoiler.



## Recalls *Continued from page 2*

many as 57 million vehicles on the road today have an unrepaired safety recall - that's roughly 1 in every 5 vehicles. Any driver can take the proactive step to check their vehicle's recall status. This is especially important for drivers of older, used vehicles and drivers who have changed mailing addresses, because manufacturers may not have their latest contact information to notify them of recalls.

Here are answers to commonly asked questions about vehicle safety recalls.

• **How do I check to see if I have a vehicle safety recall?** You can check a vehicle for safety recalls by visiting [CheckToProtect.org](http://CheckToProtect.org) and entering or uploading a photo of your 17-character vehicle identification number (VIN) or license plate number.

• **How do I find the vehicle's VIN?** Places to find a VIN include the driver's side dash, inside the driver's side door, on registration documents or the automobile insurance card.

• **Where do you take a vehicle for a recall repair?** Any authorized dealership near you will repair vehicle safety recalls at no cost to you, so don't hesitate to call and schedule



an appointment. Drivers don't need to be a current or former dealership customer to get a free recall repair.

• **Who pays for recall repairs?** No matter the age of the vehicle, automakers will cover the cost of recall repairs and parts for dealers. Authorized dealers will always repair a safety recall at no cost to the driver, regardless of whether the vehicle is registered in the driver's name or if it's still under warranty.

• **Will the dealership ask for personal information?** You don't need to provide any personal information to get a recall repaired at a dealership. The dealership only needs a way to contact you when the repair is completed.

• **How long does a recall repair take?** Recall repairs

can take as little as one hour. Customers can ask dealers about rideshare vouchers, loaner cars and other transportation services they may offer, if needed.

• **What if I'm not the owner?** You can check any vehicle for recalls if you know the license plate number or VIN. If you drive a vehicle that belongs to someone else, such as an older relative, you can check it for recalls and take it to the authorized dealership for repair, at no cost to you or the vehicle's owner.

Checking for recalls can help ensure your vehicle is in good condition, so make sure to add this simple step to your checklist of regular maintenance tasks. Take charge of your safety today at [CheckToProtect.org](http://CheckToProtect.org).

## American autonomous vehicles hit a roadblock

(NewsUSA) - As self-driving vehicles continue to extend their reach onto the roads, the United States is at risk of losing its leadership in this key area, according to a new report from the Special Competitive Studies Project, a non-profit and nonpartisan initiative with a goal of making recommendations to strengthen America's long-term competitiveness in AI.

Specifically, scaling of AVs will affect the development of autonomous systems with other industrial applications including industrial robotics, smart infrastructure, and dual-use military systems, and components and cars are increasingly sourced from China, according to the report.

The SCSP's Tech Scorecard Series, which evaluates national competitiveness across five categories, broke down the current status of the AV industry and where countries stand in the latest report, "The Autonomous Vehicle Crossroads," with the following results:

**Innovation Leadership.** In terms of AV, the United States maintains dominance in this area, with cars that set the global gold standard for safety and reliability. The U.S. also maintains a



lead in software development, especially in the areas of vision-language-action (VLA) models.

**Industrial Capacity.** Based on recent data, China dominates the physical layer of AV by maintaining complete control of both the supply chain components and vehicle manufacturing capacity. China also controls approximately 90% of the Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) remote sensing technology used in autonomous vehicles.

**Market Ecosystem.** The U.S. and China are essentially tied in terms of global funding for AV. Although the U.S. AV industry maintains the largest share, China's aggressive approach to globalization has fueled growth with mass deployment.

**Talent Pipeline.** China cur-

rently produces significantly more engineering graduates with AV-relevant skills, and is integrating more intelligent vehicle curricula into its university system. The U.S. cannot currently match this focused pipeline and struggles to compete for a limited pool of skilled engineers.

**National Leverage.** China's established state support for the AV industry and coordinated regulatory frameworks have promoted faster deployment of AV at scale compared to the U.S., where regulations remain a patchwork, with inconsistent testing and development among states.

To read the full report and take a deeper dive into the U.S.-China strategic competition in autonomous vehicles, visit [scsp.ai](http://scsp.ai).

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#### Jamie's Transmission

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## Beyond Stealth: Why black wrapped cars are the top automotive trend of 2026



By Troy Senior

In the world of automotive customization, trends come and go, but one aesthetic remains the undisputed king of the streets: the black-out look. While high-impact neon's and iridescent shifts have their moment, the sophistication of black wrapped cars continues to dominate both luxury and enthusiast circles.

As we move through 2026, the technology behind these wraps has evolved far beyond simple color changes. It is now about material science, paint protection, and the "texture of shadow."

• The Problem with Factory Black Paint

Any owner of a factory-painted black vehicle will tell you the same story: it looks incredible for the first ten minutes after a wash. Traditional black paint is notorious for showing "swirl marks," water spots, and micro-scratches from auto-

mated car washes. Furthermore, black paint absorbs the highest amount of UV heat, leading to faster clear-coat oxidation over time.

• The 2026 Solution: Advanced Vinyl Technology

The surge in popularity for black wrapped cars is driven by the fact that modern vinyl films solve the "maintenance headache" of traditional paint. Today's premium films, such as those in the TeckWrap UK collection, feature:

- Self-Healing Top Coats: Minor surface abrasions and swirl marks can actually disappear when exposed to the sun's heat.

- Finish Variety: Unlike paint, which is usually limited to gloss or satin, vinyl allows for "Super Matte," "Deep Piano Gloss," and "Carbon Fiber" textures that offer a depth of field paint cannot replicate.

- Hydrophobic Properties: High-end black wraps now mimic ceramic coatings, causing water and road grime to slide off the surface,

making maintenance significantly easier.

- Preserving Resale Value

Beyond the stealthy aesthetics, a black wrap serves as a sacrificial barrier. By "locking in" the factory paint under a high-density polymer layer, owners protect their vehicle from stone chips and UV damage. When it comes time to sell or return a lease, the wrap can be removed to reveal pristine, untouched paint—significantly increasing the vehicle's market value.

In conclusion, whether you are aiming for a "murdered-out" stealth look or a sophisticated gloss finish, the transition to vinyl is the most logical choice for the modern driver. By choosing a high-quality black wrapped cars finish, you aren't just changing a color; you are investing in a durable, protective, and high-impact upgrade that defines the vehicle's character.

Article source: <https://articlebiz.com>

## Did you know?

Anything that takes drivers' attention away from the road can be considered a distraction, and that includes phones, food, passengers, and even vehicle features like a GPS system. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says nine people in the U.S. are killed every day in crashes that involve a distracted driver. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration says distracted driving claimed the lives of 3,308 people in 2022. These distracted driving numbers reflect a growing trend of distracted driving-related incidents.

# Electric And Hybrid Car Leasing: The smart move for 2026

As we move further into 2026, electric and hybrid vehicles are no longer niche options—they are becoming mainstream. With governments incentivising greener transport, rising fuel costs, and growing environmental awareness, more drivers are considering alternative powertrains for their next car.

Car leasing has emerged as a particularly attractive option for electric and hybrid vehicles, offering flexibility, financial benefits, and a chance to embrace sustainable motoring without long-term commitment. Let's take a closer look.

## Why Electric And Hybrid Vehicles Are Gaining Popularity

Electric (EV) and hybrid vehicles combine innovation with efficiency. Fully electric vehicles run solely on battery power, producing zero tailpipe emissions, while hybrid vehicles combine an internal combustion engine with electric propulsion to reduce fuel consumption and emissions.

These vehicles are ideal for urban and suburban driving, offering silent operation and reduced running costs, the practicality of owning or leasing an electric or hybrid vehicle has never been greater.

## Leasing Versus Buying: Why Leasing Makes Sense For EVs And Hybrids

Leasing has several advantages over purchasing,

particularly for electric and hybrid vehicles. One of the main benefits is the ability to avoid depreciation concerns. Electric vehicles are evolving rapidly, with new models offering longer ranges and better technology every year. Leasing allows drivers to upgrade more frequently without being tied to an older vehicle that may lose value quickly.

Another advantage is lower monthly payments compared to buying. Since leasing involves paying for the vehicle's depreciation during the contract term rather than the full purchase price, drivers can often afford a higher-spec car for the same monthly budget. This means you could drive a top-of-the-range EV or hybrid with advanced safety features, infotainment systems, and longer battery ranges without the financial burden of outright ownership.

## Government Incentives And Tax Benefits

In 2026, governments continue to encourage the adoption of low-emission vehicles. For businesses, leasing electric or hybrid vehicles can bring significant tax advantages. Company car tax rates for EVs are often lower, and some grants and subsidies can apply to leased vehicles, reducing monthly costs even further.

Private drivers also benefit from incentives such as reduced vehicle excise

duty and, in some areas, free or discounted parking and access to low-emission zones. Leasing allows drivers to take full advantage of these incentives without long-term financial risk.

## Flexibility And Convenience Of Leasing

One of the biggest draws of leasing electric and hybrid vehicles is flexibility. Lease terms typically range from two to four years, allowing drivers to adapt to changing needs. If your daily commute changes or a new vehicle with longer battery range becomes available, you can switch to a more suitable model at the end of your lease.

Leasing agreements also often include servicing, maintenance, and warranty coverage. This is particularly beneficial for EVs and hybrids, as specialised components such as batteries and electric motors may require specific maintenance that can be expensive if handled independently. With a lease, these costs are often included, providing peace of mind and predictable monthly expenses.

## Environmental Benefits And Personal Satisfaction

Choosing an electric or hybrid vehicle is not just a practical decision—it's an environmentally conscious one. By driving a low-emission vehicle, you reduce your carbon footprint and contribute to cleaner air in



2026 Toyota RAV4

urban areas. Leasing amplifies this benefit by allowing more people to access the latest eco-friendly technology, accelerating the transition to greener transport.

There's also personal satisfaction in driving a vehicle that represents innovation and sustainability. EVs offer quiet, smooth acceleration, while hybrids deliver impressive fuel efficiency without the range anxiety associated with early electric models. Leasing enables drivers to experience these benefits without the long-term commitment of ownership.

## Potential Challenges And How Leasing Helps

While electric and hybrid vehicles are appealing, some drivers may have concerns, such as battery longevity, charging infrastructure, or

vehicle range. Leasing mitigates these worries. Since most leases last only a few years, you can switch to a newer model with improved technology when your contract ends, avoiding long-term exposure to potential battery degradation or outdated features.

Additionally, many leasing companies offer roadside assistance, access to charging networks, and flexible contract terms that accommodate changing needs, making the transition to electric or hybrid driving seamless.

## Leasing As A Strategic Choice For 2026

Electric and hybrid vehicles represent the future of motoring, offering environmental benefits, financial incentives, and advanced technology. Leasing these

vehicles in 2026 provides drivers with flexibility, lower upfront costs, and the opportunity to experience the latest innovations without long-term commitment.

For both private drivers and businesses, leasing is a strategic way to embrace sustainable transport while managing costs effectively. As technology continues to advance and the shift towards low-emission vehicles accelerates, electric and hybrid car leasing is not just a smart move—it is a practical, forward-thinking decision that aligns with both financial sense and environmental responsibility.

Article by Yellow Car Shop (<https://www.yellowcarshop.co.uk/>)

Article source: <https://article-biz.com>

## Five tips that could save your life on the road

(NAPSI)—The next time you're commuting to work or taking the family on a road trip, chances are you'll be sharing the road with large trucks; fortunately, there are safe ways to do so.

Sharing the road means also sharing the responsibility to drive in a way that keeps everyone safe. Poor driving habits or driving while distracted puts everyday drivers and truckers at risk.

So how to coexist safely?

### Try These Tips

Tip 1: If you can't see the truck driver, they can't see you. Can't spot the truck driver in their side mirror? This means you're following too closely in the truck's blindspot and need much more space. Keep a safe distance (the length of half a football field) between your car and a truck.

Tip 2: Be patient. Many trucks have a speed limiter that prevents them from trav-

eling more than 65 miles per hour. Tailgating won't make a truck driver go any faster and instead puts you both in dangerous positions.

This tip also applies to trucks making turns or backing up. Many cars try to squeeze past or around a truck when the truck driver needs only a few seconds to complete a maneuver. The truck isn't leaving a lane or space open for other drivers—it's leaving room for the

back trailer to follow.

Tip 3: Spend as little time driving beside a truck as possible. Traveling alongside or pacing a truck can be very dangerous due to the risk of a tire blowout—either the truck's tire or your own. A single semi-truck tire weighs 500 pounds—certainly not an object you'd want hitting your car. If your own tire blows out, your vehicle may end up under the truck next to you.

Tip 4: Stay out of the "no zones." Due to their large size and height, trucks have four significant blind spots around the truck: in front, behind, and along both sides.

When passing a truck, don't immediately return into the lane in front of a truck. Make

sure you can see the full truck—from its tires on the road to the tip of its roof—in your rear-view mirror first.

Many drivers don't know that the right side of a truck is more dangerous than the left. With the steering wheel positioned on the left, the truck driver has less visibility over the hood and into the right lane. Remember to always pass trucks on the left (as long as it's safe to do so).

Tip 5: Avoid the back of trucks. One of a truck's most perilous "no zones" is located behind the trailer. While it's not smart to tailgate or zip into gaps behind trucks on the go, this rule also applies when a truck is reversing on or off the road. Keep this in

mind when driving and walking through parking lots or other roads.

"I can't tell you how many times cars have tried to zip around behind me—it's extremely dangerous," says Matt Carter, Certified Transportation Professional, a Trimble sales engineering manager who also works as a hazardous material driver on weekends. "Just try to avoid the rear of a semi-truck altogether."

Learn More

For additional tips, check out the Sharing the Road Program from Virginia Tech Transportation Institute. For information on Trimble, visit <https://transportation.trimble.com>.

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