Don't Drip & Drive- Greasing the Skids with Social Science to Prevent Vehicle Leaks

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Don’t Drip & Drive: Greasing the Skids with Social Science to Prevent Vehicle Leaks

Salish Sea Conference
April 30, 2014

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- Heather Trim
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The Problem

Petroleum-based oil, grease, transmission, power steering, brake and windshield fluids

- significant toxic pollutants reaching Puget Sound waters through stormwater runoff
The Problem

Ecology estimates 7 million quarts of motor oil are dripped on roads and parking lots in the Puget Sound basin every year.
Our Goal

To decrease the threat from vehicle leak pollution in the stormwater system
Vehicle Leaks: A Complex Issue

Approaches to solving this problem

• Behavior changes
  – maintain vehicle and fix leaks when found

• Regulatory changes

• Industry changes
Applicable Findings From Social Science Research

“Sticky” messages are simple, unexpected, concrete, credible, emotional, and tell a story.¹

Use injunctive norms to provide information that the behavior is approved of.²

Applicable Findings From Social Science Research

Overwhelm can result in non-action\(^1\)

“Opt-out” programs result in greater participation\(^2\)


Target Audience

- Vehicle owners 25 years of age or older
- Income of $40,000 or more
- Vehicle is more than 2 years old
- Know or suspect they have a leak
- “Fix it for me” group
- Likely to fix leak when they know they have one
Targeted Market Research

How does our target audience respond?

Surveys & Focus Groups

- Barriers
- Motivators
- Marketing Strategies
- Messages
Barriers to Fix Leaks

• Cost
• Lack of knowledge
  – of how vehicle functions
  – what to ask a mechanic
• Fear of being taken advantage of
• Time/hassle
• Forget- not a priority
• Don’t believe it’s a problem
Motivators to Fix Leaks

Primary

• Reliability
• Safety
  - while driving
  - kids and pets
• Maintain value
  (when selling car)

Secondary

• Protect the environment

This is why I care
1. Raise Awareness
   - Cute and “uplifting” brand
   - Messaging- address motivators & barriers
   - Leak detection blitz events

2. Influence Behavior- Get Leaks Fixed
   - Website with tools
   - Repair shop incentives and discounts
   - Test more messages & intervention strategies
Raise Awareness: Vehicle Leak Testing Blitzes

“We’ll test your car for leaks and give you the results... unless you opt out”
Influencing Behavior:
Website- Addressing Barriers

• Searchable map of participating repair shops

• Consumer aids
  – What to ask a mechanic
  – Tool to identify drip type
  – Diagrams-how vehicles function
  – Consumer rights info

• Information/videos on how leaks impact:
  – Life of vehicle, safety, pets, children & Puget Sound’s Health
Campaign Phase 2: Which strategies provide the best return on investment?

- Window cling reminder
- Pledge & call backs
- Onsite mechanic at workplace
- For employer to host- mobile mechanic company or mechanic concierge service
- $100 discount to repair leaks
Influencing Behavior: Testing Intervention Strategies

3-month post-intervention survey

- Evaluate effectiveness of intervention strategies
- Obtain demographics and psychographics
- Provide recommendations for future campaign phases
Take Home Messages

• Campaigns that use social science are more likely to be effective

• Know your target audience’s barriers and motivators and develop your campaign to address them

• Integrate research as a part of your campaign to maximize results
Thank you! Any questions?

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