

ADDRESSING THE SPECIAL NEEDS OF YOUR SUV

forthwrite

creative
professional
communications

As their name suggests, sports utility vehicles (SUVs) are multi-purpose automobiles. Though they were designed to take on both activities mentioned in their simply descriptive moniker (sports, as in off-road or adventure travel, and utility, as in hauling and general over-the-road driving), like most Americans who've joined the recently swelling ranks of SUV owners, you're likely using yours less for the former and more for the latter.

No matter. While SUVs have plenty in common with their passenger car cousins, they have some unique traits and special needs that set them apart and merit some attention.

In order to handle the demanding off-road aspects of the SUV's job description, most of the larger, longer-wheelbase members of the breed are blessed with bigger engines, all-terrain tires, greater weight and a higher center of gravity. That translates into more power, better traction and greater ground clearance – all good things when you're clearing rocks and limbs on the trail.

Those same attributes, along with their ample seating capacities, abundant storage space and higher-than-average load ratings, make SUVs great for families and owners whose everyday activities including hauling or towing heavy loads.

The heavy-duty tasks we ask of our SUVs put them under stresses unfamiliar to most passenger cars. Off-road activities in particular, where engines, tires and transmissions are put under considerable strain, exact a toll that only careful operation and regular maintenance can counter.

Because of their size, power output and work load, SUV engines typically require a different grade of motor oil and more frequent oil changes than are recommended for passenger cars. Check your owner's manual carefully for the manufacturer's recommendations. Likewise, their heavier and more complex two- and four-wheel-drive transmissions demand the kind of precise use and regular maintenance you'll find outlined in your owner's manual.

forthwrite

creative
professional
communications

With a variety of sizes and types of tires now available for SUVs, be sure to choose a set that fits both your usage and your wheels. The all-terrain tires that come as original equipment on many SUVs may not be appropriate if you're simply using your SUV around town. By the same token, don't plan on taking your SUV off road if it's equipped with standard all-weather street tires. Find the tire that's right for your driving lifestyle. The fit is as imperative as the function, so be sure to get tires that are a match to the wheel size on your vehicle. Your owner's manual contains the proper specifications.

With so many SUVs on the road these days, creating and selling customized accessories for them has become a cottage industry. Many accessories, like running boards, supplementary lights, bug screens, larger shocks, equipment racks and trailer hitches, enhance the utility of your SUV. Others simply add aesthetic value. Whatever the intent, be sure to do your research on the accessory manufacturer's background and the equipment's safety record. Also, be sure to have any accessories installed by a certified mechanic and employ them only for their intended uses and within their recommended limits.

Falling in love with the all-around functionality of an SUV is easy to do. Making that love last just takes some sense and sensibility. The friendly folks at your local NAPA AUTO PARTS Store and NAPA AutoCare Center are there to help with all of your SUV needs. They've got the oils, fluids, parts and accessories you're looking for and the maintenance expertise you can depend on to ensure that you and your SUV have a long and adventurous relationship.