

## Add-ons: Power Steering Flushes

Until a few years ago, power steering fluid was often one of the most neglected fluids in an automobile. Since the introduction of mechanical power steering flush machines, however, more and more fast lubes have been able to offer this service.

According to the most recent *National Oil & Lube News* Fast Lube Operators Survey, in 2000 only 18 percent of fast lubes offered power steering flush service. By 2004, that figure was up to 43 percent.

And at an average sales price of \$53.20 per service, those operators who have added this service could be adding more than \$15,000 per year to their bottom line.

"The bottom line for fast lubes is that power steering flush services are a good fit for their business," said Richard Scott, manager, Marketing and Technical Support for Wynn Oil Company, a manufacturer of power steering flush machines. "Power steering fluid is a mineral oil-based fluid that in many ways is similar to automatic transmission fluid or engine oil, as all of these fluids degrade over time during their operating cycles. Power steering fluid is subjected to extreme heat and pressure, which cause it to oxidize and suffer viscosity breakdown, which may be noticed by the driver through symptoms of varied or increased steering effort, or power steering pump noise. Viscosity testing of used power steering fluid indicates that over the course of just a couple of years of service, many power steering fluids will not pass their original viscosity requirements. Visual examination of used power steering fluids will also often show fluid darkening due to oxidation and even the presence of component wear debris and contamination."

Scott said that although there are only a handful of vehicles that have specific manufacturer-recommended power steering fluid change intervals — the Chrysler LH series vehicles, Honda Passport and Isuzu Rodeo being just a few — many power steering systems will exhibit various

symptoms over time that can be traced to power steering fluid breakdown.

"Such symptoms include 'morning sickness,' which is used to describe increased steering effort especially on cold mornings before the power steering fluid warms up and circulates more easily, power steering pump noise or premature failure, poor power steering response and fluid leaks," he said. "Varnish deposits from degraded fluid can affect the function of the power



Power steering flush machines like these from Engine Clean Solutions and Wynn Oil Company make the service quick, easy and profitable.

steering pump and spool valves in the power steering system. Wear debris can accelerate further damage and can lead to seal abrasion and potential sources of fluid leaks, and rubber hoses can deteriorate and lead to additional fluid contamination. These are all reasons for offering this service to fast lube customers."

Power steering flush service is a natural fit for fast lubes because of its ease and speed. A power steering flush service that uses an automated flush machine can be performed in five to 10 minutes.

"In addition to meeting OEM warranty requirements, motorists will benefit (by having) a more dependable car, improved power steering performance and extended power steering component life," said Joe

Doty, president of Engine Clean Solutions, a manufacturer of power steering flush equipment. "It also eliminates noise and stiffness, provides a safer car and helps avoid costly repairs."

Scott concurred.

"A power steering flush service will restore power steering system operation in terms of steering effort in all operating conditions due to the system being filled with the proper viscosity of new fluid," he said. "In addition, wear debris, varnish and sludge deposits, and contamination will be removed from the power steering system. New fluid also keeps seals and hoses properly conditioned to minimize the chances of seal and hose breakdown and fluid leaks. Motorists will appreciate proper power steering system operation, maximum power steering system life and the peace of mind provided by avoiding expensive and inconvenient repairs."

According to Doty, power steering flush machines pay for themselves.

"The capital investment for a power steering machine can run between \$500 to \$1,500, depending on features and overall equipment, looks, finish, and durability," he said. "The price charged for the service ranges from \$35 dollars to over \$100 dollars. If a fast oil change company promotes this service (and sells) 20-plus services a month, the equipment can be amortized within one month, and the service facility can anticipate a \$30 to \$75 profit margin for this service thereafter."

Power steering flush service can be a win-win situation for both motorists and lube owners.

"Targeting this add-on service can provide a legitimate maintenance service for customers looking for optimum power steering performance and power steering system life," Scott said. ⚡

For more information on power steering flush service, contact:  
 Engine Clean Solutions..... 1-800-456-3835  
 Wynn Oil Company ..... 1-800-989-8363