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**Tire Pressure Monitoring  
Systems (TPMS)...  
Are You Prepared?**

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If you're not already familiar with TPMS, you soon will be. Every vehicle under 10,000 lbs GVWR and built after September 1, 2007, will come from the factory equipped with a tire pressure monitoring system. How proficient shops are at servicing this system, now and in the future, will certainly contribute to their continued success. Education and information is critical to that success – both for technicians and customers – and the time is now to recognize the opportunities and the liabilities that this “future technology” creates.

Instead of ignoring this new technology, becoming proficient in this field can turn TPMS into a profit center and another valuable shop marketing tool. But becoming an expert can be a difficult and expensive process. It's going to take a solid commitment at all levels of management to provide the necessary investments of additional time, training, new equipment and accurate service information. Because new technology is released with each model year, this commitment will need to be an ongoing process. In addition to educating service writers and technicians about TPMS, customers will also need to be educated. Most have no idea what that yellow horseshoe light with the exclamation point in the middle means. That is why communicating the importance, technology and legalities of tire pressure monitoring systems to the customer will be necessary.

The primary message that needs to be delivered to customers is that if the vehicle is equipped with an OEM tire and wheel combination and the TPMS light is illuminated on the dash, the driver should stop immediately and check the inflation pressure in the tires. Tell customers what type of system they have, including a brief description of system operation and what is necessary to service it.

Customers need to know several things about your legal obligations as a shop owner or technician. First, if there is a malfunction causing the TPMS to illuminate, you must fix the cause of the fault or refuse the job, but you cannot disable the light itself. Second, you cannot replace TPMS sensors on OEM rims with plain rubber valve stems. Third, you can legally replace the OEM rims with aftermarket rims that will not accommodate the TPMS sensors, and you can replace OEM tire and rim combinations with sizes and profiles that will cause the TPMS system to indicate a malfunction, but in neither case can you disable the indicator light. If your customer still wants the benefits of a TPMS system, a dealership may be able to re-program his system to work with his new tire size or profile. Fourth, if you are working with a dealer to install custom tires or rims on a new, untitled vehicle, the vehicle's TPMS system must function as designed. The more you educate your customers on the advantages that TPMS technology provides, the more they will insist that it is properly serviced to keep it operational.

Will you be able to charge more for services that involve a TPMS procedure? Absolutely! Disabling or tampering with an OEM-installed TPMS system, including the indicator light, is just like removing a catalytic converter, air bags or seat belts – it's prohibited by law. In states that require a vehicle inspection, non-operational TPMS will likely cause a vehicle to fail, so those drivers will need to have the system repaired. If it's properly explained to the consumer, they have to recognize that the additional time, expertise, and equipment necessary to service the tires on these vehicles warrants an additional charge. The bottom line is that companies who make the continued investment in training, equipment and information, so they are able to service all makes and models with or without TPMS, will see their market increase as more and more vehicles utilize this technology. The question remains – will you be prepared?