

The importance of good timing



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Time is a precious gift. I have not seen my oldest son, Jake, a U.S. Marine, for three and a half years, as he's been on special security in Turkmenistan, Croatia, and Mongolia. The time he's been away has flown by, yet to know that it's been so long since I've hugged my son makes me yearn for the time to pass a bit quicker. But if time goes faster, that will bring me closer to the day my second son, Jayden, leaves for college. Thinking of it all puts a big lump in my throat and brings tears to my eyes.

What about you? Have you missed spending time with a loved one in your life? Or is time flying by much too quickly, bringing you to a date that means losing time with someone special to you? Why can't time just stand still?

As with many things I ponder, I am somehow able to bring it back to the automotive industry in one way or another. That said, can you guess where I might go with an article about time? That's right, we're going to explore the important subject of timing belts, what they do, when and why they need to be replaced, and how much it will cost replace them.

GOOD TIMING

A timing belt is a giant black rubber band that is smooth on one side and ribbed on the other. The "teeth" on

the ribbed side fit into grooves of the components on your engine that keep the top half of your engine (cylinder heads, valves) in sync with the bottom half (crank case and pistons). Synchronizing these components is crucial as the valves must open at the correct time to allow fuel to enter the chamber and then close at the correct time to allow for compression. If the timing is off, fuel may not enter the cylinder or could escape through an open exhaust valve. If the valves are not fully closed at the correct time, the majority of the engine's power will be lost.

Depending on the type of vehicle you drive, the timing belt may also run the water pump, oil pump, and injection pump. There are some vehicles that no longer have timing belts (having a timing chain instead), but there are still plenty on the road that do. Do you know if your vehicle has one?

Good timing – no matter if it's a chain or belt – is crucial to a healthy engine.

TIME FLIES WHEN YOU'RE HAVING FUN

As we go about our busy lives having fun, things are happening in your vehicle you may not be aware of. Because the timing belt is made of rubber, there are several things that could cause it to wear and crack:

- The heat and friction inside the engine.
- Cold temperatures.
- Wearing down of the rubber "teeth."

As time passes, we may not realize the miles we are putting on our vehicles and what components need to be assessed when. Because of the importance of a timing belt, it is key to



Contributed photo

Jeana and her children: Jake, Jayden, Jace, and Briella

have it assessed periodically and have it replaced before it breaks. Though this is every 60,000 to 100,000 miles for most vehicles, it's important to check the owner's manual for your specific vehicle.

TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE

Some timing belts run the water pump, which puts the belt at risk if something goes wrong with the pump. If the water pump seizes, the strong gears stop turning abruptly, which will almost always break the timing belt. Water pump failure is often caused by a problem with the cooling system. This is one more reason to be sure you are having maintenance performed on your vehicle according to the harsh weather conditions maintenance schedule.

TIME IS THE MOST VALUABLE THING WE HAVE

If you fail to replace your timing belt, or if your timing belt breaks prematurely, the possible damage it could cause in your engine can hit your pocketbook hard and could leave you without a car for a longer period of time.

TIME IS MONEY

You may be wondering, "How much does it cost to replace the timing belt?" I have good and bad news for you. The good – it won't cost as much to replace it before it breaks as it likely will after it breaks. The bad – timing belt replacement is one of the most expensive maintenance items you will have. Often, if your timing belt runs the water pump in your vehicle, it is

replaced at the same time as the water pump and is part of a "kit. Because vehicles vary greatly and some timing belts do not run the water pump, the cost also varies greatly. Expect to spend between \$400 and \$1000 or more.

TAKE TIME TO SMELL THE ROSES

I wrote the first paragraph of this article two days before my 43rd birthday on May 17. At that time, I hadn't even dreamed of seeing Jake until this summer. But to my shock and surprise, my oldest boys had planned a reunion sooner than I thought!

You see, at my shop, we love celebrating birthdays and since mine was on a Saturday, my sweet team wanted to sing to me a day early. As I went into the break room, I was greeted with a chorus of joyous voices – Jayden's being one of them. It thrilled me that he cared enough to come. And then, out of the corner of my eye, I noticed movement and when I looked, it was Jake! He had come home to surprise me for my birthday - and surprise me he did! Since I was planning to leave town in two days, there was much on my "to do" list, but in that moment, all lists flew out the window. I planned a dinner party on the spur of the moment to welcome our boy home. And for the next two days, I took time to smell the roses – being in the presence of all four of my kids.

Moral of the story: take time to service your timing belt before it breaks as part of your maintenance program, and celebrate each moment of time you get to spend with your sweet loved ones.