

FTC clarifies rule on auto warranties

To the editor: It is a common misconception that only car dealers can perform the maintenance services on a newer vehicle that is under warranty. That is not so, according to a recent consumer alert issued by the Federal Trade Commission.

The alert states "It's illegal for a dealer to deny your warranty coverage simply because you had routine maintenance or repairs performed by someone else. Routine maintenance often includes oil changes, tire rotations, belt replacement, fluid checks and flushes, new brake pads and inspections."

The FTC is very clear on the issue. Consumers can have maintenance services performed by their local independent repair shop or even do the work themselves without affecting the warranty, even if dealers and manufacturers suggest the opposite. It is also important to note that using after-market parts does not void the warranty. Consumers are protected by the Magnuson-Moss Warranty Act, enforced by FTC, which prohibits a manufacturer from voiding the vehicle warranty because service was done by a non-dealer.

When using a non-dealer, independent after-market shop to maintain your vehicle, the council strongly recommends keeping records and receipts for all maintenance that is done to the vehicle and adhering to scheduled maintenance requirements. If a warranty claim arises, these records will provide proof that maintenance has been done in accordance with the manufacturers' recommendations and requirements.

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