

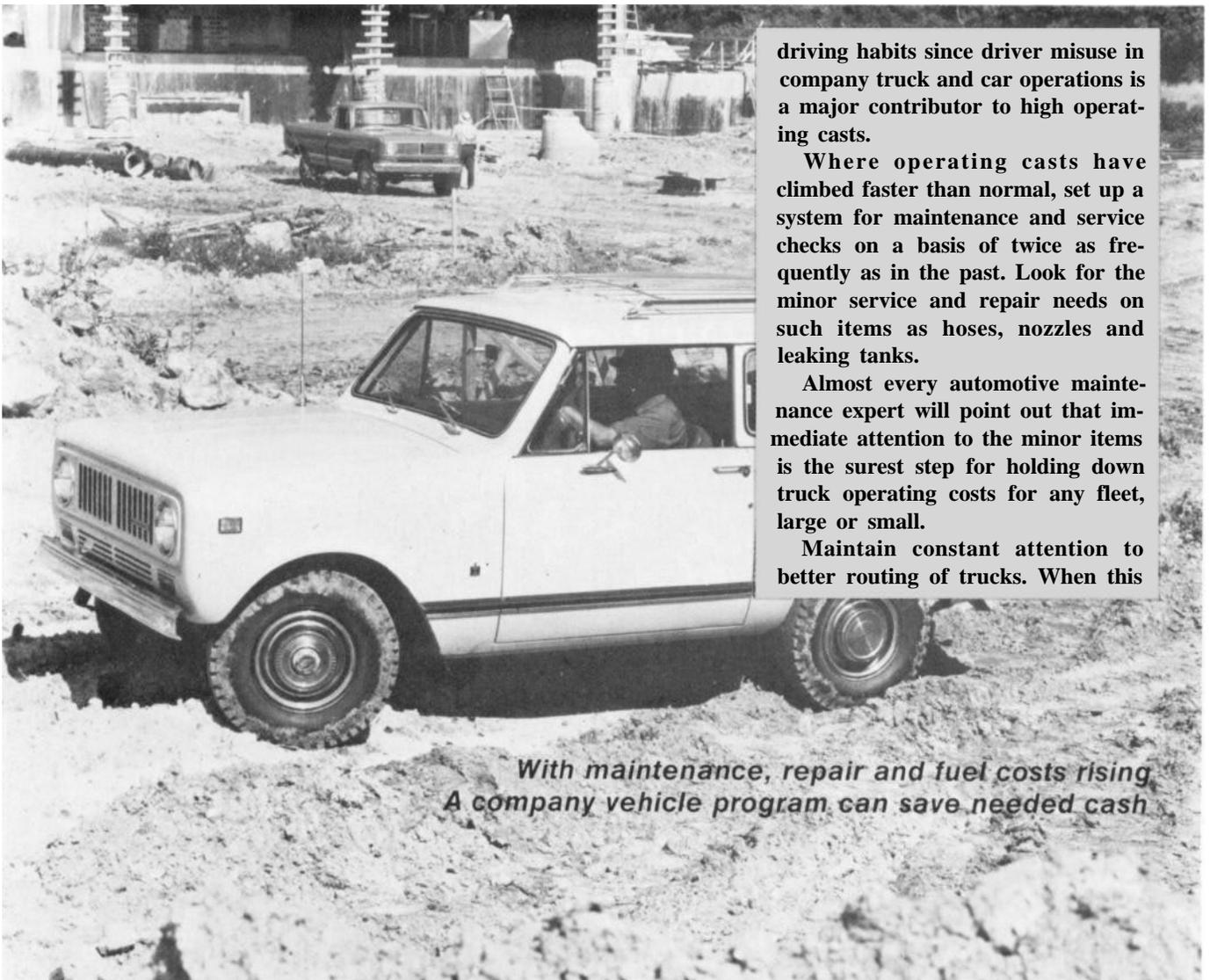
By Thelma L. Fair

Today's high costs for maintaining and repairing trucks and vehicles justifies every possible cost-saving step you can take.

Add the increasingly costly replacement factor as well as growing fuel bills and the need, for many of the steps listed below becomes even more urgent.

It is also important that any contractor setting up a maintenance and repair schedule place heavy emphasis on the use and handling of company vehicles. Many of the following suggestions involve improved

VEHICLE CARE: Daily attention pays off



driving habits since driver misuse in company truck and car operations is a major contributor to high operating costs.

Where operating costs have climbed faster than normal, set up a system for maintenance and service checks on a basis of twice as frequently as in the past. Look for the minor service and repair needs on such items as hoses, nozzles and leaking tanks.

Almost every automotive maintenance expert will point out that immediate attention to the minor items is the surest step for holding down truck operating costs for any fleet, large or small.

Maintain constant attention to better routing of trucks. When this

*With maintenance, repair and fuel costs rising
A company vehicle program can save needed cash*

is done on a systematic basis, it is surprising how much of a daily reduction in mileage can be achieved.

And drivers who are kept so minded can be major contributors by taking advantage of opportunities to reduce unnecessary trips.

Establish and enforce the strictest possible rules for truck use by drivers. Establish these rules with the aim of reducing repair frequency on each truck.

The average driver is all too prone to ignore the contributions that careless driving makes to operating costs. It applies as well to the veteran driver as to the new man on the job. The former often show the greatest neglect.

Take a long and hard look at the quality of oil, gasoline and diesel fuel, lubricants, etc., that are being used in preventative maintenance.

The highest possible quality—consistent with cost—should be used. The modest savings brought about through use of “just a little

Saving Fuel and Money

Here are some tips that contractors are using to reduce fuel costs:

Because cold engines consume more gasoline, drive at slow speeds until engines warm up.

Shut off engines when not in use.

Consider carefully the gear ratio when purchasing new vehicles.

Restrict use of company vehicles to company business.

Watch proper tire pressure; gas usage can go up by 10 percent when tires are low.

Plan a tune-up schedule (10,000 to 15,000 miles suggested).

Monitor gasoline charge-out records to identify excess uses.

less expensive” fuel and lubricants are almost automatic assurance of higher repair bills over the long run.

Institute more careful checks on overloading for this invariably produces strains and stresses not engineered into the truck’s capability.

Too often, employees gauge loading limits with a visible check on springs, tires and other body details. It’s a helpful procedure, but often overlooked are the effects that overloading has on the motor, transmission, and rear end parts. Strict adherence to the operating manual provides greater protection than does a quick “once-over” to make sure the tires haven’t “bottomed out.”

Where possible, limit the use of your vehicles during highly adverse weather conditions, over punishing terrain, etc. Many times, trucks are put into use during circumstances where a little more careful planning

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could avoid unnecessary wear and tear.

This is particularly true of many makes of the new lighter weight vans which are coming into wider usage throughout the industry.

Where possible, assign each vehicle to a specific driver. Almost every survey ever taken has shown that in a company where vehicles are available to all drivers the feeling of responsibility toward any given vehicle is reduced.

Conversely, an assigned driver will familiarize himself with the characteristics of a specific vehicle and will usually spot developing problems earlier.

Try to keep company vehicles as neat and clean inside and out as possible. Such an effort not only contributes to a longer vehicle life, but psychologically it demonstrates to employees that you are concerned about the appearance of your equipment. And when you are-and show it-they care, too.

Consider a program of recognition for good records on the part of your drivers, not only for safe driving but also for maintaining low repair costs on the vehicles they use.

Insist on quality parts and materials being used in all repair work to assure maximum length of continued performance. □

(The author, Thelma L. Fair, is a free-lance writer from Clackamas, Oregon, who specializes in construction management subjects.)