



Jiffy Lube changes 3,000-mile rule for oil changes

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By **Chris Woodyard**, USA TODAY

Motorists caught between quick-lube chains' and automakers' guidelines on when to get an oil change may finally catch a break.

The largest chain, [Jiffy Lube](#), is ditching the long-held one-size-fits-all mantra that oil should be changed every 3,000 miles. Instead, it says, franchisees will combine customer information on driving habits and the recommendations from their car's owner's manual for types of driving, from light to "severe," to come up with a specific schedule for that customer.

The system, which uses a kiosk with a computer to access a database of manufacturer guidelines, has been in testing for several months.

"We're showing them on a screen (what) a manufacturer recommends," says Jiffy Lube CEO Stu Crum. He says 47% of the customers at participating locations opted for the severe-driving schedule, with plans to get oil changed an average of every 3,502 miles. "Customers are choosing oil-change schedules that indicate they will return regularly."

Regular oil changes are a key way to prolong the life of an engine, but automakers have lengthened recommended intervals in recent

years to as many as 10,000 miles. "Oil-change intervals are determined by operating conditions and driver habits, not by miles driven — busting the 3,000-mile oil-change myth," says GM spokeswoman Pam Flores.

In a further blow to the quick-lube business, many vehicles now let drivers know electronically when it's time for an oil change.

Parts in modern engines fit more tightly, and gasoline quality is generally higher, prolonging oil life, says David Champion, auto editor for *Consumer Reports*. He says he suspects that as customers have visited less often, chains may be coming up with the consultation idea or coaching motorists toward the severe-driving schedule as "a way to drum up more business."

Some quick-lube operators argue, however, that if car owners haven't changed their oil for 5,000 miles or more, despite what a manual might say, they are asking for trouble. "We know what we see," says Pat Wirth, president of the 1,200-member

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Automotive Oil Change Association.

She says most people drive in city traffic and temperature extremes that should put them on the more-frequent severe-driving schedule. And she says dashboard warning lights can provide "a false sense of security," because they aren't necessarily accurate.

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