

What You Don't Know...



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Photo courtesy AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety

Some may believe that what they don't know can't hurt them, but I take exception to that theory. Here's why I feel this way.

I had decided it was time for an upgrade. I couldn't afford a new truck, but I wanted a bigger one. I spent countless hours searching the Web and eventually found the "perfect" used truck for me. It was being sold below "blue book" value.

The dealership was more than cooperative when I asked if I could drive the truck for a few days, allowing me enough time to find a mechanic to give the truck a once-over. The mechanic pointed out a few things that needed to be repaired. I took his estimates and was able to get the asking price lowered under the terms of an "as is" purchase with no warranty. It was such a good deal I couldn't resist.

Looking over the list of repairs, I prioritized what needed to be done immediately and what could wait. One of the things that didn't work right was the cruise control. When it was engaged and I applied the brakes, the truck would surge because the cruise control wouldn't disengage. I decided this problem

wasn't a high-priority item since I was the only one who would be driving the vehicle.

I had owned the truck a month before I finally decided to get the low-priority items repaired. When I went to get my truck from the mechanic, he had a surprise for me. He explained that I had been driving the truck without brake lights for the entire month. The cruise control works off the same switch as the brake lights.

Thinking back, I remember checking most of the lights. I had neglected the brake lights, though, because it took two people to check them. For a month, I had been endangering everyone I met on the roads. I also had been risking the welfare of my family because we had taken the truck on some road trips during the month.

What did I learn from this experience? I'm thorough every time I inspect a vehicle now. When it comes time to check the lights, my spouse helps me. She presses on the brake pedal while I walk around and ensure the lights are working. ■

The author was assigned to VAQ-134 when he wrote this article.