

Comma launches hard-hitting brake fluid campaign

Cosan Lubricants is supporting its Comma brand distributor network across Europe with a compelling campaign highlighting the dangers of poor quality brake fluid.

The marketing and PR-led campaign is targeted at both workshop and consumer-facing media and is designed to carry an emotive and educational message, to raise awareness and to help build trust with their customers.

Research conducted for Cosan Lubricants' Comma brand has revealed that the brakes on around a quarter of all cars on European roads could fail at any time. In the UK alone, 26.5% of motorists had defective braking systems, with nearly one in 10 unintentionally risking their lives every time they drove. Overall across Europe, that figure rose to 41% of vehicles operating with sub-standard brake fluid.

The study also revealed a worrying lack of understanding among motorists about how brake fluid functions – three quarters had no idea, meaning distributors can unlock the chance for workshops to build trust and educate customers.

Brake fluid absorbs moisture from the atmosphere, which reduces its effectiveness by lowering the boiling point. Once the boiling point dips beneath 180 degrees Celsius, brake fluid becomes increasingly ineffective, with the potential to cause sudden and inexplicable brake failure.

Brake fluid testing expert; Alba Diagnostics, recommends replacing brake fluid when its boiling point is reduced to 200 degrees Celsius. But, shockingly, some of the vehicles tested by Cosan Lubricants had brake fluid that boiled at only 130 degrees.

The extensive Comma brake fluid range covers at least 99% of the UK vehicle parc.

Table showing boiling points of braking fluid

<i>Temperature °C</i>	<i>Percentage of Vehicles</i>
<181	8%
181-200	18.5%
201-250	64%
>250	19.5%

Cosan Lubricants' research found that even newer vehicles could be at risk when looking at the link between the age and mileage of a vehicle and the quality of its

brake fluid. One in seven vehicles with less than 80,000 miles on the clock had fluid showing a boiling point of less than 200 degrees.

Meanwhile, 75% of workshop customers either admitted that they don't know how brake fluid works, or gave an inadequate account when asked. More than a third (34%) had not changed their brake fluid for over two years.

The rest of Europe is not much better, with a total of 71% of motorists quizzed unable to explain how brake fluid works.

Mike Bewsey, spokesperson at Cosan Lubricants, said: "Our research shows that the quality of brake fluid in the car parc is poor and that consumers do not understand how it works. This gives our distributors a perfect chance to help their customers educate and safeguard the consumer."

In the UK, a visual fluid level check may be carried out during a vehicle's MOT, but surprisingly, quality testing is not part of the test.

Bewsey added: "Testing the boiling point temperature is the only way to check the quality of brake fluid. Workshops with foresight to offer brake fluid quality testing will unlock not only an additional revenue stream and upselling opportunity, but will also be more likely to win the ongoing trust and loyalty of their customers."

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Editor's notes

Mileage of vehicle (from sample)

	<i>Temperature °C</i>				
<i>Mileage</i>	<i><181</i>	<i>181-200</i>	<i>201-250</i>	<i>>250</i>	<i>Average °C</i>
<i><60,001</i>	1.8%	4.4%	20.2%	3.5%	211
<i>60,001-80,000</i>	2.8%	5.3%	17.5%	0.8%	203
<i>80,001-100,000</i>	1.8%	4.4%	13.2%	2.6%	222
<i>100,001-120,000</i>	0.8%	2.6%	6.1%	2.6%	230
<i>>120,001</i>	0.8%	1.8%	7.0%	0%	205
<i>Total</i>	8%	18.5%	64%	9.5%	

Age of vehicle (from sample)

	Temperature °C				
Age	<181	181-200	201-250	>250	Average °C
<3 years	0%	0.8%	1.0%	1.5%	253
3-4 years	0%	0%	1.7%	2.4%	237
5-6 years	3.6%	0%	13.0%	3.3%	224
7-8 years	4.4%	5.5%	15.3	2.3%	234
>8 years	0%	12.2%	33%	0%	202
Total	8%	18.5%	64%	9.5%	

Why is brake fluid condition critical to braking efficiency?

Braking systems on modern vehicles – cars, vans & motorcycles etc – are actuated by brake fluid under the hydraulic pressure created by applying the brake pedal. Even in normal operation, all braking systems generate substantial heat, so brake fluid must have a high boiling point to remain effective. However, brake fluid is hygroscopic: i.e. it absorbs water naturally from atmospheric moisture. Over time, the water contaminates the brake fluid, lowering its boiling point. Water boils at 100°C, evaporating into steam, which - unlike fluid - is compressible. The result is so-called 'soft pedal', the symptom of reduced hydraulic pressure: braking effect is diminished or lost completely when the brake pedal is applied. When the steam cools however, it condenses back into a fluid state, seeming to restore normal braking function - until the (heating) process is repeated, when the symptoms re-occur. Given its characteristics of sudden brake failure, this condition has been labelled 'the silent killer'

Cosan is one of Brazil's leading conglomerates, operating in sectors strategic for the country's development, such as infrastructure and energy. Cosan Lubricants produces and distributes the most advanced automotive and industrial products under the Mobil brand across South America and has a footprint in the United Kingdom, Europe and Asia Pacific through the Comma brand.

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