

Can OEMs penalise car owners for not sticking to service schedules?



By [Mark Dommissey](#)

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With the effects of the pandemic still impacting regular commuting patterns and social distancing measures resulting in alternative work arrangements, many South African drivers simply aren't accumulating the same distances as they were pre-Covid 19. While lower mileages do come with the potential of increased vehicle trade-in or resale values further down the road, they also mean that servicing routines have been thrown out of kilter for those drivers who normally reach distance allowances before allotted time intervals.



Mark Dommissey, chairperson of Nada

Whether you rely on an old-school service booklet in your cubbyhole or a clever onboard system that displays a notification on your car's instrument cluster, it's important to keep a close eye on service schedules in order to not miss an important workshop visit.

There have been a number of recent instances at National Automobile Dealers' Association (Nada) member dealers where customers have missed their service deadlines. In many of these cases, it's because vehicle owners are driving less, and they aren't aware that service schedules are based on a combination of distance and time allowances. Where possible, these dealers and respective Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) will work with customers to reach amenable solutions, but it's important for owners to know that the responsibility for servicing their vehicles at the right time lies with them.

Depending on which carmaker is involved, and by how much a service deadline is missed, failure to adhere to your car's service schedule can result in various penalties. In very minor cases it's possible that a respective OEM will overlook the lapse as a gesture of goodwill, but this is a leeway that certainly should not be relied upon as a get-out-of-jail-free scenario.



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Various brands will handle lapse situations differently, but generally speaking, a failure to have your vehicle serviced on time can make warranties and/or service plans immediately voidable. In certain instances, these can be reinstated with an extensive vehicle check – at a customer's expense – but in severe cases, a completely voided warranty can have a devastating impact on the value of your asset. If your car is financed there may be further implications, as vehicle maintenance forms part of the loan terms agreed with your bank.

It's also important to remember that service intervals are not standardised across all vehicles and vehicle brands. It appears there may be a common misconception that schedules are set at 15,000km or one year, regardless of what vehicle you drive and this is definitely not true. I recommend familiarising yourself with your particular vehicle's service schedule, either by looking in your owner's manual or service booklet or by calling your nearest franchise dealership for information.

Today's dealers will often call customers ahead of planned services, but this is an added courtesy and should also not be relied upon. Again, the onus of meeting maintenance deadlines falls solely on the customer. Even if your car is out of the plan, it's a good idea to keep on top of vehicle upkeep. Not only will this potentially increase its value, but it's also good for the health of your car.

ABOUT MARK DOMMISSE

Chairperson at National Automobile Dealers' Association.

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