A truck being weighed at a mobile weighbridge

MAINTAINING A RADIATOR

BE CAREFUL, USE RIGHT TOOLS TO CLEAN CAR RADIATOR

BY EVALINE NAMUWAYA

Radiators play a key role in cooling a car engine. If a radiator gets clogged, the engine will overheat and the results can be devastating.

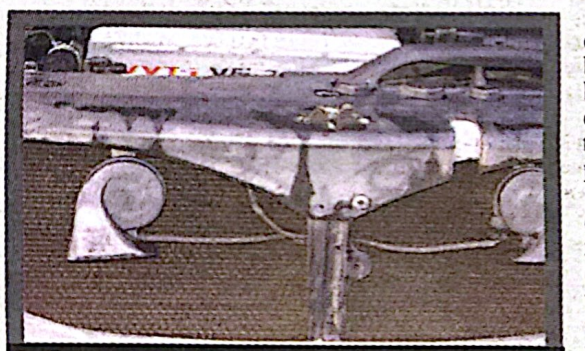
How to clean a radiator

Godfrey Kasozi, a mechanic at El-Bethel Auto Workshop in Seeta, Mukono, says there are many ways of cleaning a radiator and these depend on one's finances and how clogged it is.

"Ideally, a radiator should be cleaned with radiator flush fluid. This can save you a lot of damage that might come with the alternative method that requires detaching the radiator from the engine," he adds.

Kasozi says if one cannot afford the radiator flush, tap water can be used to flush the cooling system.

"Most car owners in Uganda do not buy radiator flush because it is expensive. I hardly use it. If the radiator is not very dirty, we just connect a water pipe to the inlet of the radiator, then detach the outlet horse pipe from the engine. We then switch on the engine while water runs through the radiator to the engine, then out," he explains.



Radiators should be cleaned using radiator flush fluid

Kasozi adds that after flushing, the cooling system should be drained of all water therein and the inlet and outlet tightly closed. It is after this that you refill the radiator with a coolant.

John Ssentongo, who owns a washing bay in Kampala, says using radiator flush is the best way to clean a radiator because it saves a lot of time and prevents unnecessary damages.

How to use the coolant

"Start by draining the coolant from the radiator by opening the drain valve at the bottom. Then drain the coolant from the engine block by opening the block drain. One must ensure that they collect the coolant in a drain pan."

Ssentongo adds that one can add radiator flush and then refill the cooling system with water.

"After that, start the vehicle and let the engine idle for 15 to 30 minutes, depending on how long it has taken since the last coolant flush. However, one should watch the car's temperature gauge during this process to see if it is not over-heating, because of a problem introduced to the cooling system," Ssentongo

He explains that radiator flush has cleaning agents designed to remove any dirt from your cooling system without damaging the components.

"Sometimes I drive my car with the coolant for an entire day and then drain it afterwards. That is the way I clean my radiator," he says.

Detaching the tanks

Ssentongo says if the radiator is very dirty, it has to be disconnected from the engine system. Thereafter, the top and bottom tank should be detached to ease the cleaning.

"In order to remove dust from the pipes, one has to examine them by looking through, from one end to the other. So it is important to detach both tanks. Some tanks are clipped on the radiator, while others are sealed by welding," he expalins.

Ssentongo advises that if a steamer is available, it should be used since it uses steam under pressure rather than using a water pressure gun that is meant to clean the car body. "The water pressure gun uses a lot of pressure, which damages the fins of the radiator," he warns.

Cleaning radiator fins

Kasozi says cleaning the fins, requires a lot of care because they are fragile.

"We recommend a soft nylon brush to loosen dirt from the fins - not a wire brush, as a soft metal core is easily damaged. Do not poke it with a wire or a screw driver," he warns.

Ssentongo adds that you can run water through the radiator fins from the back to the front to clean them thoroughly.

Refilling anti-freeze

Kasozi says the major cause for increased rust in radiators is improperly mixed anti-freeze.

"If water from the tap is used to mix anti-freeze, a whole new variety of chemicals is added to the coolant, many of which can be harmful to your vehicle," he cautions.

Ssentongo also warns that before the coolant is added, be sure to read the instructions on the anti-freeze. Some may require mixing with water, while others are already diluted. Often times, it is cheaper to buy anti-freeze that requires dilution.

"If someone chooses to do this, buy one litre of distilled water for every litre of anti-freeze. Because if one uses distilled water, this will ensure that no additional foreign minerals or chlorine gets into the cooling system," he says.

Anti-freeze concentrate costs about sh160,000 a litre. Most filling stations do not sell this product.

Radiator flush is also not commonly found in lubricant shops, but costs sh18,000 for a 350ml bottle.

Scanned with CamScanner