Monthly Owner Check + Recall Checklist

Owner-level only: no repairs, no diagnosis, no under-car work. For gasoline cars, hybrids and battery EVs.

> **Read this first.** Your owner's manual controls which checks you can do, when, and how. Ticking boxes does not certify a vehicle as safe. If you cannot identify or safely reach something, write "not checked" and ask a qualified technician.

- [ ] **Park securely** on level ground away from traffic, parking brake on, vehicle fully off (not hybrid/EV "READY"), and let it cool as the manual requires. Do not touch hot or pressurized parts, fans or moving parts. Keep clear of orange high-voltage cables. Do not crawl under the vehicle or use a jack.

1 Tires: measure, then look

- [ ] Gauge each road tire when **cold** (not driven for at least three hours). Compare with the label on the driver's door frame or the owner's manual, **never the number on the tire sidewall** (that is the tire's maximum). Front and rear targets can differ.
- [ ] From ground level, look at tread and sidewalls for cuts, cracks, bulges, objects or uneven wear. Tread should be at least 2/32 inch: place a penny in the tread with Lincoln's head upside down; if you can see the top of his head, the tire needs replacing. A tire-pressure warning light does not replace a gauge check.

> A flat, visible damage, repeated pressure loss or vibration needs prompt attention, not next month. Do not drive on a flat; contact a tire professional or roadside assistance.

2 Fluids: only what your manual allows

- [ ] Find out from the manual which fluid checks are owner-level for your vehicle (engine oil on gasoline and hybrid cars; washer, brake and coolant where permitted). Battery EVs have no gasoline-engine oil check. Never assume every reservoir is yours to open.
- [ ] Read only accessible level marks or a manual-approved display, following its shutdown and waiting rules. Leave caps closed. **Never open a hot or pressurized cooling system.** A low level or unexpected change needs qualified service; do not just refill and ignore it.
- [ ] Look from beside the parked vehicle for new wet patches on the ground. Note where, and arrange service if you suspect a leak.

3 Lights: see and be seen

- [ ] Using the manual's engine-off lighting mode, check headlights (low and high), tail and parking lights, turn signals, hazards, interior lights and plate lights if fitted. Arrange service for anything that fails, flickers or has a damaged lens.
- [ ] Brake lights: only if the manual permits a stationary check, with a helper at the controls, engine off and not in gear. Watch from the side, never behind a vehicle in gear. Do not select Reverse for this walk-around; if unsure, mark "not checked".

The Five-Minute Recall Check

NHTSA suggests checking twice a year.

Source. NHTSA's recalls page (nhtsa.gov/recalls), read November 27, 2026. NHTSA's tools and wording can change, so use its page for current rules.

- ☐ **Find your VIN.** Look at the lower left of the windshield for the 17-character VIN. It is also on your registration card and may be on your insurance card. Copy it slowly and read it back once.
- ☐ **Search by VIN or license plate** at nhtsa.gov/recalls. That tells you whether your specific vehicle still needs a recall repair. Searching by year, make and model gives only general results.
- ☐ **Read the result.** A clean car shows "0 unrepaired recalls associated with this VIN." Plate search showing your old car? Search by VIN and ask your state DMV to update its record.
- ☐ **If a recall is open,** follow any interim safety guidance in the notice and contact a local dealership to fix the recalled part for free. If it says not to drive the vehicle, follow that.
- ☐ **Put it on the calendar.** NHTSA suggests checking twice a year.

What the search will not show

- A safety recall already repaired
- Some brand-new recalls where not every VIN is identified yet (VINs are added continuously, so check regularly)
- Safety recalls more than 15 years old, unless the maker offers more coverage
- Recalls by small vehicle makers, including some ultra-luxury brands
- Non-safety customer-service campaigns
- Recalls involving an international vehicle

So a clean result means "nothing found" in NHTSA's lookup, not a guarantee about the car.

4 Keep a record

Date		Vehicle		Odometer	

Tire	LF	RF	LR	RR	Spare
Target (label)					
Cold reading					

Recall search date and result: _____

Not checked or not applicable: _____

Issue, next action and follow-up date: _____

Sources: NHTSA, Check for Recalls (nhtsa.gov/recalls); NHTSA, Winter Weather Driving Tips (nhtsa.gov/winter-driving-tips) for cold-tire, door-frame label and penny-test guidance. General guidance only; your model's manual controls. Do not write your VIN on shared copies. Made with AI assistance and reviewed before release. Free to print and share for personal use; please do not resell.