Turn Off Air Recirculation to Reduce Risk of Transmitting Airborne Illness

The air recirculation door actuator, typically located near the cabin air filter and blower motor, will close when the air recirculation feature is in use. This forces the ventilation system to reuse air inside of the vehicle. On a hot day, this feature helps reduce strain on the A/C system, by recycling cool air inside of the cabin vs. constantly cooling ambient air.

Recent research confirms that contagions can be transmitted between passengers in the same vehicle through droplets circulating in the air. To reduce the risk of transmitting airborne illness in the vehicle, avoid using the air recirculation feature. Three researchers from Harvard's T.H. Chan School of Public Health say "...opening the windows, even just a crack, can help dilute the concentration of droplets and aerosols in a car. That brings fresh air into the vehicle".

As described in gpd Tech Tip #153, "Precautions to Take When Replacing the Cabin Air Filter", the cabin air filter should be replaced regularly, on average every 15,000 to 20,000 miles, to prevent pollen, dust, and other outside contaminants from entering the vehicle. A recent study by the Society of Automotive Engineers also notes that *true* HEPA cabin air filters "can trap germs down to .3 microns". Although not proven to reduce the spread of contagions, changing the cabin air filter is a routine maintenance that can improve the quality of air in the vehicle. To further reduce the risk of airborne illness transmission in the vehicle, the CDC recommends all passengers wear a mask when traveling with others and disinfect high contact areas as often as possible.

Avoid using the air recirculation feature to reduce the spread of contagions passenger to passenger and replace the cabin air filter routinely to improve air quality in the vehicle.

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