

When my Honda check engine light came on right before a trip to the Oregon coast, I was understandably perturbed. We were taking a three day, two night trip, and the last thing I needed was to have my car strand me half way there and ruin our vacation. Like most people, I knew very little about check engine codes, and figured that it was a mysterious question best left to the dealership. Although they charge more than they should to clear the codes, I still trusted my auto shop to know what to do and whether or not my car was safe.

One of my friends, however, said that it was nothing to worry about. He had had check engine lights come on many different times on several cars, and he told me that three nine out of ten, it wasn't a big deal. Maybe my emissions were a little bit high, my fuel economy had declined, or some other minor problem was besetting my car. He even had a check engine diagnostic tool at his house, and he offered to clear the light for us. Unfortunately, we didn't have time to stop by his house before the trip. I wish I would have. If I had seen what the check engine light was trying to tell me, I never would have tried to make it to the coast without getting service done.

For a while, the car drove fine. I didn't even notice the check engine light after the first few miles, as a matter of fact. We were driving from eastern Oregon, and we had a long and mountainous drive ahead of us, but soon my mind was completely at ease. Then the sputtering started. The check transmission light came on, and we knew we were in big trouble. It came on at the worst time too. We were climbing some pretty steep road, and it was a very bad place to be stranded. Nonetheless, stranded we were. About 100 miles after that check engine light came on, the car died on the side of the road.,

I guess the moral of the story is that nine 9 out of 10 isn't a safe bet! Your check engine light tells you that there could be something seriously wrong with your car, and you had better listen. Even if it is probably nothing, it is always better to be safe than sorry.