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Getting Your Vehicle Ready for Winter

By MalaMaal.com

Getting Your Vehicle Ready for Winter

Mechanical failure—an inconvenience any time it occurs—can be deadly in the winter. Preventive maintenance is a must. Besides, a well maintained vehicle is more enjoyable to drive, will last longer, and could command a higher resale price.

Some of the following tips can be performed by any do-it-yourselfer; others require the skilled hands of an auto technician.

First things first. Read your owner's manual and follow the manufacturer's recommended service schedules.

* Engine Performance—Get engine driveability problems (hard starts, rough idling, stalling, diminished power, etc.) corrected at a good repairshop. Cold weather makes existing problems worse. Replace dirty filters—air, fuel, PCV, etc.

* Fuel—Put a bottle of fuel de-icer in your tank once a month to help keep moisture from freezing in the fuel line. Note that a gas tank which is kept filled helps keep moisture from forming.

* Oil—Change your oil and oil filter as specified in your manual—more often (every 3,000 miles) if your driving is mostly stop-and-go or consists of frequent short trips.

* Cooling Systems—The cooling system should be completely flushed and refilled about every 24 months. The level, condition, and concentration of the coolant should be checked periodically. (A 50/50 mix of anti-freeze and water is usually recommended.)

DIYers, never remove the radiator cap until the engine has thoroughly cooled!

The tightness and condition of drive belts, clamps, and hoses should be checked by a pro.

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* **Windshield Wipers**—Replace old blades. If your climate is harsh, purchase rubber-clad (winter) blades to fight ice build-up. Stock up on windshield washer solvent—you'll be surprised how much you use. Carry an ice-scraper.

* **Heater/Defroster** The heater and defroster must be in good working condition for passenger comfort and driver visibility.

* **Battery**—The only accurate way to detect a weak battery is with professional equipment. Routine care: Scrape away corrosion from posts and cable connections; clean all surfaces; re-tighten all connections. If battery caps are removable, check fluid level monthly.

Avoid contact with corrosive deposits and battery acid. Wear eye protection and rubber gloves.

* **Lights**—Inspect all lights and bulbs; replace burned out bulbs; periodically clean road grime from all lenses.

To prevent scratching, never use a dry rag.

* **Exhaust System**—Your vehicle should be placed on a lift and the exhaust system examined for leaks. The trunk and floor boards should be inspected for small holes. Exhaust fumes can be deadly.

Cold weather will only make existing problems worse. A breakdown—never pleasant—can be deadly in the winter.

* **Tires** Worn tires will be of little use in winter weather. Examine tires for remaining tread life, uneven wearing, and cupping; check the sidewalls for cuts and nicks. Check tire pressures once a month. Let the tires "cool down" before checking the pressure. Rotate as recommended.

Don't forget your spare, and be sure the jack is in good condition.

Carry emergency gear: gloves, boots, blankets, flares, a small shovel, sand or kitty litter, tire chains, and a flash light. Put a few "high-energy" snacks in your glove box.

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Avoid Getting Stranded This Winter

By News Canada

(NC)—You can never take winter driving conditions for granted. Take for example the Minnesota man who, in January 2001, drove a few kilometres to the grocery store and ended up getting stranded in a winter storm for 36 hours!

While you should always try to avoid driving in winter storm conditions, it is sometimes unavoidable. Since the weather is often unpredictable, Michelin advises drivers to be prepared for the unexpected.

"Installing four winter tires on your vehicle will help keep you on the road and can prevent drivers from becoming stranded in severe weather conditions," advises Tony Mougios, Brand Manager for Michelin in Canada. "Michelin has incorporated new technologies and rubber compounds into our winter tire lines to give drivers extra control and performance in winter conditions."

In the event you find yourself stranded on the highway or a secondary road this winter, Michelin offers the following tips:

Move your vehicle as far off the road as possible to avoid being hit

Turn on your hazard lights to attract help

Keep additional clothing in your vehicle and put it on to keep warm

Use a cellular phone to call for help

Do not drift away from the car and run the engine periodically, but not continuously

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Move your arms and legs to improve your circulation and to keep warm

Consider the outside temperature and wind chill before leaving your vehicle

The most important tip to remember is not to run your engine continuously, especially if snow is accumulating rapidly. Internal combustion engines produce exhaust fumes known as carbon monoxide - a colourless, odourless gas that, if inhaled in sufficient quantities, can cause drowsiness, unconsciousness, coma and even death. If snow accumulates and blocks your exhaust pipe, you are at risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.

Take the time to have your vehicle checked before venturing out on the roads this winter because a little preparation and prevention can go a long way. Just as you never expect to get stranded, you can never tell what old man winter will have in store.

– News Canada

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