

Car Maintenance Tips for the Winter Cold

Eight Winter Car Care Tips

FAIRFAX, Va.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--

The sight of your white breath just after leaving your house is usually a good sign to head back inside and grab a hat to protect yourself from the cold. Similarly, when cold weather hits and you start seeing harmless, steamy, white exhaust from your car, it's usually a good sign that you should protect your car from the cold.

"Cars and cold don't get along," says Jim MacPherson, who writes for The Hartford Courant, has served as an expert on driving for Inside Edition and hosts a car-care radio show on WTIC-AM in Connecticut. "The plummeting temperatures cause all kinds of problems. So, in order to stay safe, save money and reduce fuel consumption, it's important to keep your car properly maintained and tuned. For specific suggestions for your car or truck, check the owner's manual that came with your vehicle."

Follow these tips and winter driving will be a little easier.

1. Routine Maintenance - For winter, it's important to ensure your vehicle's battery and charging system are in good operating condition. In cold weather, a battery's cranking power is reduced significantly. At the same time, the electrical power needed to start your car increases when the temperature plunges. Having quality jumper cables or a portable power pack in your trunk is a superb way to prepare for the worst. At the same time, check to make sure your heater and defroster work. Finally, check your wiper blades.
2. Lubrication - To ease engine startup during cold weather, use a multi-viscosity oil such as Mobil 1 0W-30 or Mobil 1 5W-30, which will help protect your car at temperatures below zero. Low-viscosity oils not only speed startup, but help reduce wear by flowing oil quickly to critical engine parts. Fully synthetic oils, such as Mobil 1, are specifically designed to protect your engine in all temperatures.
3. Filters, Coolant and Hoses - Make sure all filters -- oil, gas and air -- are in good condition. Check your coolant level and thermostat functionality to ensure proper engine warmup. Coolant should be changed every two years; extended-life coolants last about five years. Check for leaking or soft hoses and replace. Also, be sure to check the radiator or coolant tank pressure cap.
4. Tire Pressure - Examine your tires, checking for excessive wear and proper inflation. Good tread is needed to stay safe on snow and ice. Additionally, both under-inflation and over-inflation are undesirable. Low pressure increases wear and fuel consumption, while over-pressure can reduce traction, especially in icy conditions. If you live in an area with heavy snowfall, consider snow tires.

5. Vehicle Warmup - You should allow your car to idle for a few seconds to make sure the lubrication is circulated throughout the engine, providing protection. It's not necessary to idle for a long time, as that simply wastes fuel and offers no more protection than a few seconds of idling will. Nonetheless, drive easily at first.

6. Slow Down - With less than ideal winter driving conditions, slow down. Do not exceed speed limits and keep safe driving distances. Avoid gas-wasting jackrabbit starts and pace your driving to help avoid the need for sudden stops, which is especially critical during wet and icy road conditions.

7. Dealing with ice - Make sure you have window ice scrapers and de-icers for the locks. When you're stuck, having a small shovel is useful to dig out of the snow. The weight of a bag of sand in the trunk will give added traction in rear-wheel drive vehicles and can be used to sprinkle on the snow and ice to gain better traction. And don't forget personal protection such as a warm coat, hat and gloves, and a blanket, in case you get stuck in a storm.

8. Keep Fuel in the Tank - Never let the fuel tank drop below the half-full mark. A sudden storm with unexpected heavy snowfall could leave you stranded for hours. Having an adequate fuel supply will allow you to idle the engine from time to time to keep warm.

"Your car will be a more dependable throughout the winter if properly cared for," says MacPherson. "Take care of your car in the cold and it will keep you from being left out in the cold."

For more information on vehicle maintenance, check out www.mobiloil.com.

Source: Exxon Mobil Corporation