

Winter Vehicle Maintenance

The following winter maintenance tips will help keep your vehicle running in good condition during the cold months. Sources: www.ARAcontent.com and CAA – Canadian Automobile Association

- Batteries and Corroded Cables At 0° Celsius a fully charged battery loses 35% of its power. Winter mornings can wreak havoc on an older battery. The average life of a battery is 3 1/2 years. If your battery is older than that, it's probably time to replace. Have a mechanic check the battery and cables to ensure your car starts quickly and reliably.

Keep your battery terminals tight, clean and dry.
- Boots Front-wheel drive vehicles equipped with CV (constant velocity) joints should have the boots checked for rips and cracks. Boots protect CV joints, but when the joints are exposed to salt, ice and snow, they can damage the joint. Replacing a joint can cost hundreds of dollars, but replacing a boot costs a small fraction of that.
- Brakes Don't postpone needed brake work. It's dangerous to drive with poorly performing brakes, especially in snowy weather.

Postponing brake service also can cause the cost of overhauling your brake system to skyrocket.
- Fluids Check your engine oil level. Oil marked "SAE or API-SJ" or higher provides the best protection. Owners of diesel-engine cars should check their owner's manual to determine the best cold-weather motor oil.

Most car manufacturers recommend 5W-30 oil for year-round operating conditions because it improves cold-weather starting and provides better fuel economy and performance.

Check and change your engine coolant (diluted with 50 percent water)

Check your transmission fluid. Pure engine coolants can freeze at zero degrees, but mixing with water prevents freezing and provides great protection for the cold weather.
- Fuel Tank Condensation can build up in a near-empty gas tank in extremely cold temperatures, which can cause fuel line freeze-up and no-start conditions.

Keep your gas tank above half-full at all times. In the event you get lost or stranded, you'll need your engine's heat to keep you warm. **IMPORTANT NOTE:** If such a situation occurs, always crack the window a little to keep fresh air coming in.
- Heating Check your heater, front and rear defrosters for proper operation.

For extreme winter temperatures, you may want to install a block heater.
- Lights Check your lights; taillights, brake lights, headlights, turn signals, emergency flashers
- Rubber Parts Radiator, heater and vacuum hoses, among others, should be checked for cracks and bulges.

Inspect all belts for damages and splits.

- Rust, Minor Scratches and Nicks Road salt can turn a slight scratch or nick to an ugly rust spot that's impossible to avoid. And it can spread. Avoid costly body work by restoring spots before they turn into larger problems.
- Spark Plugs Worn or misfiring spark plugs can affect how efficiently a vehicle burns the fuel/air mixture, ultimately affecting engine performance.
- Tires Worn, bald or badly aligned or balanced tires can mean accidents on ice, rain or snow. Have your tires checked for proper inflation and alignment, and rotate them about every 6,000 miles.

Installing snow tires will provide additional traction.
- Windshield Safety A small ding in your windshield can turn into a major crack because of „thermal shock“ or temperature stress caused by cold outside temperatures and warm inside temperatures.
- Windshield Wipers Change the wiper blades to prevent poor vision in already poor driving conditions. Use heavy-duty wipers in the winter. Switch to summer wipers when the threat of ice and snow are gone to reduce the wear on your wiper motor.