

## Winter Vehicle Prep

As the winter months sneak up on us it is easy to think to yourself that you have prepped your vehicle properly for the brutal winter. It always happens, "I'll just go get my ice scrapper out of my car" and when you go to get it you realized you never put it back from when you took it out when you needed that extra space for packing on that summer vacation. It seems as if we never get our vehicles fully ready for winter until we go to grab something for the winter when you're out and about or getting ready to leave for work and realize you don't have what you need. **Here are some tips that should help prep you vehicle properly:**

**Tip 1:** Put a "winter supply" box in your car. This is the single most important thing you can do for your car and for your personal safety. Having a box full of winter supplies in your trunk can make all the difference when something goes wrong while traveling on a cold winter day. Here's a quick list of items you should include in that box: a flashlight, road flares, a first-aid kit, a few blankets, a change of warm clothes for the driver, a few extra pairs of gloves, a radio, a charged cellphone for 911 calls, a bag of sand (for traction), an extra ice scraper and some high-energy snacks (like nuts or jerky).

**Tip 2:** Check your engine coolant and antifreeze levels. Antifreeze is the magical substance that keeps your engine from freezing during those times of the year when you feel like you are freezing. Without it, your engine can freeze, leaving you in a real pickle at a time when it's dangerous to be stranded. A kit for checking your engine coolant levels is available at almost every auto supply store. Using that kit can let you know quickly if you have an appropriate coolant mix. You can also directly check your antifreeze levels by following the instructions in your car's manual. Adding more antifreeze is very simple, too, if you need to do it.

**Tip 3:** Check your tire pressure and tread depth. Good tires are the key to staying on the road and keeping safe when the weather is questionable and snow and ice are falling from the sky. If you live in a particularly wintry climate, you may want to consider installing winter tires before the season begins, as they will make all the difference when it comes to getting around.

**Tip 4:** Use winter windshield wiper fluid. Not all windshield wiper fluid is the same. Ordinary fluid that you use in the spring, summer and fall often becomes worse than useless in the winter, as it freezes quickly upon contact with your windshield. When winter comes, switch out your fluid for "winter" fluid. Winter fluid is designed for the rigors of winter weather and won't freeze on your windshield. In fact, it actually helps loosen ice and snow from your windshield, making it much easier to keep things clear.

**Tip 5:** Switch to a winter-grade oil at your next oil change. In general, the colder the weather, the thinner you want the oil in your engine to be. The viscosity of your oil in colder weather is indicated by the first number in the oil specification, with a lower number indicating better viscosity in cold weather.

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### IS YOUR VEHICLE WINTER READY?

