

Winter Driving Checklist & Tips for Safe Winter Driving

Get Your Car Serviced Now.

No one wants to break down in any season, but especially not in cold or snowy winter weather. Start the season off right by ensuring your vehicle is in optimal condition.

- Visit your mechanic for a tune-up or other routine maintenance.
- Have your entire vehicle checked thoroughly for any leaks, bad hoses, or other needed part repairs or replacements.
- If you plan to use snow tires, have them installed now. Check out www.safercar.gov for tire ratings before purchasing new ones. For existing tires, check to ensure they're properly inflated (as recommended by your vehicle manufacturer), the tread is sufficient with no uneven wear, and that the rubber is in overall good condition. Note that tire rubber starts to degrade after several years, and tires need to be replaced even if they have not seen much wear.

Check Your Battery.

When the temperature drops, so does battery power. Plus, it takes more power to start your vehicle in cold weather than in warm. Find out if your battery is up to the challenges of winter.

- Have your mechanic check your battery for sufficient voltage.
- Have the charging system and belts inspected.
- If necessary, replace the battery and/or make system repairs. When coolant freezes it expands.

Windshield Wipers and Defrosters.

Safe winter driving depends on achieving and maintaining the best visibility possible.

- Make sure your windshield wipers work and replace worn blades.
- If you live in an area that gets a lot of snow and ice, consider using heavy duty winter blades.
- Check to see that your window defrosters (front and rear) work properly.
- Completely fill your wiper fluid reservoir before the snow hits.
- Use high quality, 'no-freeze' fluid.
- Buy extra wiper fluid to keep on hand in your vehicle.



Check Your Cooling System

When your coolant freezes it expands. Such expansion can potentially damage your vehicle's engine block beyond repair. Don't let this happen to your vehicle this winter.

- Make sure you have enough coolant in your vehicle and that it's designed to withstand the winter temperatures you might experience in your area.
- A 50/50 mix of coolant to water is sufficient for most regions of the country. See your vehicle owner's manual for specific recommendations.
- Thoroughly check the cooling system for leaks or have your mechanic do it for you.
- If your system hasn't been "flushed" (draining the system and replacing the coolant) for several years, have it done now. Over time, rust inhibitors in anti-freeze break down and become ineffective.

Inspect Your Tires

Regardless of season, you should inspect your tires at least once a month and always before embarking on a long road trip. It only takes a few minutes.

- Check tire pressure and make sure each tire is filled to the vehicle manufacturer's suggested PSI (pounds per square inch) of air pressure, which is listed in your owner's manual and on a label inside the driver's door.
- Keep a tire pressure gauge in your vehicle at all times and check pressure when tires are "cold"—meaning they haven't been driven on for at least three hours.
- Look closely at your tread and replace tires with uneven wear or insufficient tread. Tread should be at least 1/16 of an inch or greater on all tires.

Plan Your Travel and Route

Keep yourself and others safe by planning ahead before you venture out into bad weather.

- Check the weather, travel conditions, and traffic; plan to leave early if necessary. Make sure you fill up your fuel tank before you leave in case you get stuck in traffic due to weather or an accident.

Stock Your Vehicle

Carry items in your vehicle to handle common winter driving tasks—such as cleaning off your windshield—as well as any supplies you might need in an emergency.

- Snow shovel, broom, and ice scraper.
- Abrasive material, such as sand or kitty litter, in case your vehicle gets stuck.
- *Jumper cables, flashlight, and warning devices such as flares.*
- *Blankets for protection from the cold.*
- *Cell phone, water, food (snacks), and any necessary medications you may take.*

