



Winter Care Care

Give snowstorms the brush-off!

Signs your battery needs to be replaced

Ever dealt with a dead car battery in the middle of winter? Not much fun, is it? Drivers are far better off ensuring that their battery is in good shape before the thermometer dips. But how can you tell if your battery needs to be replaced? Here's what to look out for.

INDICATORS OF AGE

Car batteries typically last four to six years. One indication that yours is on its last legs is that the interior lights and/or headlights have gotten dimmer. Another good clue is that your vehicle doesn't jump to life when you turn your key in the ignition: instead, your start up is slow, weak or inconsistent. If you're experiencing these problems and your battery is old, it's a good idea to get it checked by a licensed technician to see if it needs to be replaced. If your battery is still under four years old, it may just need to be recharged.

LOW VOLTAGE

Recharge your battery when the voltage is lower than 12.4 volts. You can check the voltage using a voltmeter or multimeter. If you have a car battery recharger, you can recharge the battery yourself. Otherwise, get a professional to do it.

Provided this resolves the issue, your battery is likely still fine. However, should the problem return, check the voltage again. If the battery won't hold a charge, it's time to get it replaced. If the voltage is within range, it might be an issue with the alternator.

PROBLEMS WITH THE ALTERNATOR

Note that a defective alternator has similar secondary effects as a weak battery. For this reason, it can sometimes be a good idea to consult a mechanic before replacing your battery. This way you're sure to get a full and



Four ways to protect your windshield in winter

Want to protect your windshield against the season's hazards? Then be sure to adhere to these four easy guidelines.

1. Defrost windows the right way

Sudden temperature changes weaken your windshield and make it more susceptible to cracking. For this reason, never pour hot water on your windshield during winter. Instead, defrost using the vehicle's heating system. If you want to speed up the process, consider purchasing a block heater. This device has the additional advantage of providing extra warmth to your vehicle — including the windshield — when it's off.

2. Upgrade your windshield wipers

As your windshield is more fragile during winter, worn out or damaged windshield wipers can scratch the glass. Make sure you have high-quality wipers. Also, take care to clean them regularly and confirm that they're properly placed.

If you're purchasing new wipers, consider getting a model designed specifically for winter, made with material ice doesn't stick to. Otherwise, you can prevent ice buildup by putting a newspaper or a thin piece of cardboard between the wipers and the windshield.

3. Drive defensively

The best way to protect your windshield when you're behind the wheel is to cruise at a safe distance from other vehicles. In winter especially, you don't want to have rocks and other road debris flying towards your windshield.

4. Get cracks repaired right away

If despite taking these precautions you get a crack or chip in your windshield, get it fixed as soon as possible. Cracks tend to expand, leading to costlier repairs.

Winter tune-up checklist

This winter, consider asking your mechanic to provide a complete tune-up. This will help ensure that your car runs smoothly all season long. Though your specific car's servicing needs will depend on its model, features and age, mechanics generally inspect the following components during a tune-up:

- Windshield wipers
- Battery
- Spark plugs
- Belts
- Steering and suspension
- Filters
- Brakes
- Engine
- Fluid levels (engine oil, coolant, brake fluid, etc.)
- Headlights and brake lights
- Exhaust system
- Heating system
- Electrical system
- Thermostat

As garages are usually busy in the winter, don't delay in making an appointment for your car's tune-up.



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Save fuel in winter

Fuel is so expensive these days that all sorts of tricks are being passed along to help save any amount of the precious liquid. Winter is known to be one of the worst enemies of fuel saving motorists. How could they save more fuel?

Obviously, the choice of vehicle is where to start. We are all aware that a big V8 powered, all-wheel drive truck will gobble up gas so fast, its driver will have to spend a lot of money to keep it running this winter.

But be also leery of some four-cylinder powered cars or

trucks that are performance-oriented or others with turbo engines and all-wheel drive that may be real gas guzzlers.

Saving gas means driving carefully, observing speed limits and more. Keep a careful eye on your tires' air pressure (or even better, inflate them with nitrogen!) and don't let the engine idle too long to warm-up the interior. Also, try not to carry too much dead weight in the trunk, only the necessary accessories to help you cope with winter's little surprises.

The best piece of advice for saving as much fuel as possible is to get the car in top shape before winter begins. That means choosing lighter engine oil, changing the air filter and having your mechanic look at the general maintenance of the whole car. Also, remember that a block heater with a timer to power it up in the middle of the night will make firing up the engine easier (and with less fuel) in the morning.

RCMP remind drivers to dig out their winter driving safety skills

Much of Saskatchewan is experiencing its first taste of winter and Saskatchewan RCMP reminds drivers to be prepared and take care when driving on snow or ice-covered roads:

- Scrape all the ice off your windows before driving—if you can't see, you can't drive safely.
- Remove all snow from your vehicle, including from your headlights, taillights and roof.
- Slow down on snowy or slippery roads. Remember that some roads may be more slippery than they appear. Beware of black ice.
- Be gentle and smooth when you accel-

erate, brake or steer.

- Using cruise control on icy or snowy roads can be dangerous! If you skid, your vehicle will accelerate and rapidly spin its wheels as it tries to maintain a constant speed.

- Before traveling, check the weather forecast for both your current location and destination. If travel can be delayed during storm warnings, do so.

- Be prepared for anything: consider stocking your vehicle for the winter with extra warm clothes, candles, matches, non-perishable snacks, a snow shovel, traction mats, booster cables and a tow rope or chain.



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Are you and your vehicle winter ready?

In Saskatchewan, we know that our weather can change quickly, as evidenced by the recent colder temperatures, snowfall, slush, and ice. Now's the time to get our vehicles and our winter driving habits, ready for winter.

Drivers: Winter ready check list

- **Check weather and road conditions before you travel:** Allow extra time to reach your destination safely. Be prepared to reduce your speed and drive with caution.
- **Clear your vehicles of ice and snow:** Driver visibility is a safety concern if windows are covered in ice and snow.
- **Slow to 60 km/h on Saskatchewan highways:** For first responders including tow truck operators, law enforcement, paramedics, firefighters, and highway construction workers.
- **Signal lights:** Every vehicle has them. Use them in advance to communicate your driving intentions with other road users.
- **See and be seen:** In many vehicles, the daytime running lights (DRL) are always on. But this doesn't mean that the rear lighting is on which results in 'Phantom Vehicles' that are virtually invisible from behind because their rear lights aren't on. Turn your vehicle headlights and taillights on in harsh weather and in low visibility.
- **Roadside safety kit:** Pack extra winter gear including mitts, toques, and footwear. Take along a mobile phone with charger (for emergency use only), non-perishable food, water, a shovel, window ice scraper, snow brush, and booster cables.
- **Watch for snowplows:** Trucks now have amber flashing lights for increased visibility. Remember to slow down, stay back, and stay safe.

- **Check the Highway Hotline:** For updates on winter road conditions.
- **Allow pedestrians extra time to cross roads safely:** Drive with caution in school zones, crosswalks, and intersections. Watch for pedestrians crossing the street, and please allow time for them to cross safely.

Vehicles: Winter ready check list

- **Winter tires:** A definite recommendation by CAA. The different rubber compound in winter tires allows for better traction and control. When choosing winter tires, consider the tread design, type of rubber, size, and conditions of use.
- **Check your vehicle's tire pressure:** The right pressure is important for traction and fuel efficiency. Check the air pressure regularly. Improper inflation can not only be dangerous but can also cause increased tire wear resulting in added costs for replacement tires.
- **Battery:** The battery is your vehicle's lifeline. Extreme weather weakens the battery so check it often and have it charged if necessary.
- **Block heater and cord:** Make sure the cord is not frayed and is in good working condition. Always plug in when the temperature falls below -15°C.
- **Check your vehicle fluids:** This includes antifreeze, brake fluid, and the window washer fluid which are all vital to safe winter travel.
- **Brakes:** Have your brakes inspected thoroughly and service them if necessary. This will help with better braking power especially on icy, snow-covered roads.
- **Fuel:** Keep a full tank or at minimum a half tank of fuel. This will help reduce moisture in the gas tank plus it adds weight to your vehicle.

4 winter storage mistakes to avoid

If you have a vintage ride or seasonal vehicle that you need to store for the winter, here are four mistakes you should make sure to avoid.

- 1. Storing your vehicle in an unsuitable location**
If you want to keep your car in good condition over the winter, you can't store it just anywhere. Leaving your vehicle on the dirt or grass, for example, creates a lot of humidity, which can cause your car to rust. The best place to store your ride is in a dry, temperate, well-ventilated area such as a garage.
- 2. Storing your vehicle with an empty tank**
To prevent condensation and rust from forming inside your fuel tank, make sure to keep it at least three-quarters full. You may also want to consider adding a fuel stabilizer to make it easier to start the engine in spring.
- 3. Storing your vehicle while it's still dirty**
Deep clean your vehicle inside and out before storing it for the winter. Loose wrappers and crumbs on the inside of your car can attract pests, while water stains, bird droppings and dirt on the outside of your car can damage the paint.
- 4. Storing your vehicle without notifying your insurer**
Remember to inform your insurance company that you'll be putting your car into storage. You can often switch to a policy with a lower premium that still covers your vehicle for things such as theft and vandalism.

Taking the necessary precautions will ensure your vehicle stays in tip-top shape when you're ready to hit the road again.



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5 problems cars are prone to in winter and how to fix them

Winter weather can lead to mechanical mishaps and be the cause of various issues with your car. Here are five common cold weather problems and how to solve them.

1. A frozen lock

Use a lock de-icer, windshield washer fluid or a hair dryer to melt the ice. If your key is entirely made of metal, you can use a lighter to heat it before slowly inserting it in the lock and (hopefully) melting the ice.

2. Iced over windows

Use a defrosting product in combination with a good quality scraper to quickly clear your windshield.

To stop ice from accumulating on your windshield and windows, use a tarp or large piece of cardboard to cover them while your car's parked. Finally, prevent frost from developing inside your car by leaving a window cracked open to let the humidity escape. Alternatively, leave a container filled with cat litter open somewhere inside the cab.

3. Stuck wheels

Try to wedge pieces of cardboard, wood or something else that'll provide friction beneath the

wheels. Traction aids, sand, cat litter and gravel are other options. Gently press on the accelerator until your tires are free.

4. Frozen car door

Pour lukewarm water or windshield washer fluid over the door joint (don't use hot water). Once your car door is open, make sure to wipe it thoroughly to remove all traces of the liquid.

To prevent this issue from happening in the future, apply a protective product to the rubber seal. Alternatively, place a large plastic bag between the seal and the car's frame before closing the door.

5. Unscheduled roadside stops

Stock your trunk with warm clothes and an emergency blanket in case you're forced to stop on the side of the road, either to wait for help to arrive or for the weather to ease.

If you're in for a long wait, crack a window so air can circulate and turn the engine on every 15 to 20 minutes.

Finally, make sure to keep an emergency kit in your trunk so you can deal with any other unfortunate winter surprises.

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