

Winter is Coming, Get Your Car Ready

by (ARA)

Right now the weather is warm and pleasant, but before you know it, temperatures will cool off and there will be snow on the ground.

Not only is now a good time to check your furnace and seal up the cracks around windows and doors, you should get your car ready for winter as well.

The colder months ahead can really take their toll on your vehicle, especially if you live up north or in the Midwest. A few simple preventative measures taken now will keep your car both working and looking good during the long, harsh winter ahead.

A good place to start is by checking your tires. You need to make sure the hot pavement you were driving on all summer long didn't wear the tread on your tires down. If it did, stopping on wet roads in the fall and winter will be difficult because your tires will tend to hydroplane.

To check the tread, all you need is a Lincoln penny. Insert Abe's head into the tread in a couple of spots on each tire. If you see the entire top of his head, your tread is less than one-sixteenth of an inch deep -- below the level where you can count on it in slippery conditions. Time to replace your tires.

Since dirt ages a car and attacks paintwork, now is also a good time to get your vehicle washed and waxed. As a rule of thumb, it's a good idea to wash your car or truck every week or two, more often if you regularly drive through dirt.

Most brands of wax recommend you reapply once a month; but if you don't have the time or inclination to do so, now there's a shine available that protects your finish for years. Glenn Canady, president of 5 Star Technologies, explains how it works.

"5 Star Shine combines PTFE, the same substance that makes nonstick cookware slippery, with durable acrylic elements to create a chemical fusion that actually bonds with the molecules of your paint for unbeatable shine and protection," he says. "Once applied, the seal repels dirt and grime, including environmental pollution and the salt dropped on roads to promote the melting of snow and ice in cooler climates."

The shine is so strong it protects newer cars for up to five years; while lasting between two and three years on older cars. Each 5 Star Shine kit will protect 250 square feet, which is more than enough for a car and even the largest SUV. It can also be used to protect boats and airplanes. For more information, or to place an order, call toll-free (866) 395-7827 or log on to www.5starshine.com.

Here are some other things the pros at the National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) recommend you take care of before winter arrives:

- * Have a qualified auto technician check the condition of your battery and cables, plus the radiator, and all hoses and belts.

- * The cooling system/radiator should be completely flushed and refilled as recommended. The level, condition and concentration of the coolant/antifreeze should be checked periodically. (Never remove the radiator cap until the engine has thoroughly cooled!)

- * Make certain the heater and defroster are in good working condition; have the exhaust system examined for leaks, a potentially deadly condition in closed vehicles.

- * Replace worn wiper blades and keep plenty of washer fluid on hand to fight road salt, grit and other grime.