

October is Car Care Month; Time to Prepare for Winter Driving

by Bend Weekly News Sources

The cooler temperatures and early snowfall at Mt. Hood are sure signs that the winter driving season is right around the corner. Once again, AAA is designating October as Car Care Month, and encourages vehicle owners to "get ready, get set, and go."

"After the hot summer, millions of vehicles need preventive maintenance before cold weather sets in," says Earl Baker, AAA Oregon/Idaho Approved Auto Repair Manager. "Throughout October, our Approved Auto Repair partners will check batteries and conduct complimentary maintenance inspections to help motorists prepare for winter driving conditions. The check-up, valued at about \$60, includes tires, wipers, all belts and fluids, lights and the electrical system."

The most frequent problems found during the AAA vehicle inspections are due to improper tire pressure and low or dirty motor oil, anti-freeze or other automotive fluids. Baker offers these useful tips to help motorists get ready, get set and go this winter:

Get Ready: Before driving long distances, check weather conditions along the route. As a safety precaution, take a cellular phone and a winter driving kit that includes a flashlight with fresh batteries, a small snow shovel and brush, traction mats, ice scraper, booster cables, warm blanket, flares or triangle warning devices, heavy gloves, window washing solvent and first aid kit.

Get Set: Inspect the vehicle thoroughly before leaving home. Be sure tires are properly inflated, fluids are at proper levels, front and rear lights are operating and belts and hoses are in good condition. Remember: a common cause of cold-weather breakdowns is a weak or dead battery.

Go: Once the vehicle is road ready, drivers must be sure they're prepared. Here are some winter driving tips:

In slippery and icy conditions, slow downâ€”keep a safe distance from other vehicles and minimize brake use. When starting, apply gentle pressure on the accelerator to maintain traction and to avoid skids. The most effective way to stop on ice and snow is to apply brakes gently, well in advance of the intended stop point. Vehicles equipped with an antilock braking system (ABS), may cause a vibration or pulsation in the brake pedal when stopping, which means the system is operating as designed and preventing wheel lock up. Apply firm pressure to the brake pedal until the vehicle completely stops. Do not pump the brakes if the car has ABS.

Be sure all passengers are securely restrained at all times with seat belts or child passenger safety seats. When driving in falling snow or fog, slow down, use low-beam headlights or fog lights and stay a safe distance from the vehicle in front. To help avoid gas line freeze up, keep the gas tank at least half full to minimize condensation.

For more information, call (800) 452-1643.