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Winterizing Vehicles An Important Step For Drivers

As fall gradually gives way to winter, vehicle owners often sigh at the thought of driving in winter weather or spending weekday mornings clearing their vehicles of ice before heading to the office. But manning the wheel through another snowstorm or whittling away another night's worth of ice from a car's windshield are not the only rites of passage motorists must endure as cold weather returns.

Winterizing a vehicle can improve vehicle performance during a time of year that, in many locales, can be especially harsh on automobiles. Low temperatures make for less than ideal conditions for engines to run, while potholes left behind by snow plows can damage a vehicle's wheels and may even result in flat tires and a damaged suspension system. In addition, salt used to improve traction on roadways can cause rust. Short of moving to a locale with mild winters, there's little drivers can do to protect their vehicles from harsh winter weather. But winterizing a vehicle can prevent some of the more common issues drivers may encounter when the temperatures dip below freezing.

\* Take time out for your tires. Winter weather can limit traction, putting the safety of drivers and their passengers in jeopardy. When possible, avoid driving in the snow, and steer clear of roads where ice and black ice are known to form.

While such measures can greatly reduce your risk of being in an accident, you likely can't avoid driving entirely come the winter. Drivers who want improved traction from their tires throughout the winter can purchase winter tires for their vehicles. Such tires can more effectively handle roads that are covered in snow and ice than all-season tires. Another way to improve traction during the winter months is to constantly monitor tire pressure, which decreases more rapidly when the weather is cold. Properly inflated tires provide better traction and protect against damage that may occur when driving over potholes.

\* Consider a low-viscosity oil in the winter. The owner's manual of your vehicle may recommend you use a lower viscosity motor oil to counter the dip in temperature that's synonymous with winter. When the temperatures outside fall, the oil inside your vehicle thickens, and a thicker oil won't circulate through the engine as well. This can cause engine problems because the engine won't be adequately lubricated. A low-viscosity oil is naturally thinner, so it may improve lubrication throughout the winter. The vehicle owner's manual should recommend oils based on climate. If not, talk to your mechanic about changing from the oil you use throughout the year to a low-viscosity alternative during the winter.

\* Inspect your vehicle before winter arrives. No one wants to be out on the road during the first snowstorm of the year only to discover certain components are not working properly. Belts and hoses, while durable, can be put through strenuous conditions during the winter months, so a close inspection of belts and hoses should be conducted in late fall. In addition, windshield wipers are especially important in winter, when snowfall can drastically impact visibility. You will want your wipers working at full capacity once the

brush or even a snow shovel in the trunk as well. A snow shovel may be necessary if you need to dig your car out if it's been buried somewhere other than your driveway. Other items to carry in your trunk include a blanket, a change of clothes, an extra hat, an extra pair of gloves, some nonperishable food, and a few bottles of water. Winter can be especially harsh on automobiles. But drivers can take several preventive steps to ensure their vehicle is safe and sound on the roads this winter. Keeping tools like a snow brush or ice scraper in the trunk of a vehicle is one way to ready a car for the winter months ahead.

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Diagnosing A Leaky Car

Very often drivers find that the seats or the mats below their feet are damp or downright sopping wet. But unless a window or sunroof was left open during a rainstorm, drivers may find it difficult to decipher why their vehicles are suddenly soaked. Unfortunately, when a vehicle's interior is wet, that could be a sign of a significant problem, one that can gradually worsen over time. Wetness can cause electrical components or metal structures in the car to rot, and a soggy interior may eventually be overcome by mold. It is best to find out what is causing the leak as soon as possible and have the problem fixed just as quickly. Finding the source of a leak is not always easy. Sometimes drivers can locate it themselves and then fix the problem on their own, while more serious problems might need to be handled by a professional. But it is best to assess the situation before booking an appointment with your mechanic.

Cars can spring a leak for a variety of reasons. Leaks from systems under the hood, as well as rainwater or water from washing the car, can infiltrate the interior if seals around doors and/or windows are broken or gaskets are worn out. Figuring out which type of liquid is entering your vehicle can help you determine what's behind the leak. A clear, slippery liquid under the seats may be indicative of a leak in the brake fluid reservoir. Brake fluid is a liquid used in the braking system to apply hydraulic pressure from the master cylinder to the calipers to the pads against the wheel drums. If you discover brake fluid, check the master cylinder or the clutch master cylinder to see if there is a leak or spillover of the fluid. Coolant also can leak under the dashboard and into the foot wells of a car. Coolant is a sticky, green and sweet-smelling fluid, and a coolant leak could mean that a heater

core or hose in the cooling system is leaking. In such instances, hoses may need to be replaced. Some vehicles have water diverters on the sides of their windshields to make sure water flows off of the windshield when the wipers are in use. Also, the trough where the wipers rest should have a sealant that prevents water from entering at the base of the windshield. Over time, both can wear out and may need to be replaced and resealed. Try sitting in the car on a dry day and spraying a hose on the windshield. See if any water eventually makes it inside of the car. If it does, the windshield is likely the reason your vehicle's interior is getting wet. A clogged drain in a vehicle's heating, ventilation and air conditioning system is one of the more common causes of interior water damage. If the drain is clogged, condensation from the system cannot drain from the tube. In such instances, water backs up into the system and can actually blow out of the car vents or elsewhere in the vehicle, forming a pool on the floor of the car. Leaves or debris can cause a blockage. If excess water is left in the HVAC system, it can damage the blower motor. Also, a faulty seal that is located between the HVAC case and the firewall of the vehicle may cause water to leak into the passenger compartment under the carpet. In some cases, cleaning blocked drains in a vehicle's HVAC system may be as simple as blowing compressed air through the vents or using a wire to clear out leaves or dirt. Other times it may be hard to access the leaks, and such instances are often best left to a mechanic. The causes of leaks in a car are not always so easy to diagnose. But it is important to figure out where the water is coming from early on to minimize the damage water can do to your vehicle. After taking a vehicle through the car wash, drivers may notice a leak inside the car.



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Prepare Vehicles For Harsh Weather

As the seasons change, motorists must take steps to safeguard their vehicles, especially when the season changes from fall to winter. Each winter, many vehicles are subjected to sub-zero temperatures, snow-fall and icy roads, and such conditions can take their toll on vehicles over time. Taking steps to prepare vehicles for winter weather is a vital step that can make cars and trucks safer for drivers and their passengers.

BATTERY  
Old batteries should be replaced before winter begins. Without a strong, properly functioning battery, engines cannot turn over. Most batteries last between three and five years. However, extreme cold can compromise batteries, especially those that have been around awhile. Batteries are made up of acid and water, and cold temperatures can freeze the water, thereby affecting battery performance. According to AAA's Automotive Research Center, at 32 F, the average battery loses 35 percent of its strength. Newer batteries can be protected by starting the vehicle each day to warm up and recharge the battery. Let the car run for at least 10 minutes if you cannot take an extended drive.

EXTERIOR MAINTENANCE  
Keeping a car waxed and sealed can help maintain a durable exterior finish. This includes not only the paint, but the rubber and vinyl parts of the car's exterior. Winter is a good time to switch to a heavy-duty synthetic wax that can shield against water and road salts. High-quality sealants can be used on bumpers, trim and rubber door seals as added protection. Speak with an automotive retailer or even the car dealership if you are unsure which products will make your car's parts most durable for winter weather. Do not stop washing your car just because the weather is cold. Slushy, wet roads and snow-melting salts can speed

up the formation of rust or other decay on the undercarriage of the vehicle. These materials will need to be periodically cleaned off. Flush the underside of the vehicle whenever possible, taking advantage of any dry, slightly warmer days.

TIRE PRESSURE  
According to the automotive retailer Pep Boys, vehicle tires lose a pound of air pressure for every 10-degree drop in temperature. Many modern cars will alert to changes in air pressure, and drivers should be diligent in maintaining the proper tire pressure. Fuel economy as well as handling ability can decline when tires are not inflated properly. Tires can be

refilled at many gas stations for little cost.

WIPERS  
Visibility is key in hazardous weather conditions, and keeping the windshield clean is a priority. This means ensuring there is enough windshield wiper fluid in the car and that it is a product that will not freeze. Wiper blades can freeze and crack in the winter. Older blades may be more susceptible to damage. It's a worthy investment to replace existing wiper blades at the start of each winter. When vehicles are parked, pull the wipers off of the windshield to safeguard them from sticking and cracking. Cold weather requires drivers to amp up their vehicle maintenance routines. Consult with a mechanic or automotive retailer for more ideas and products that can help your vehicles operate safely and efficiently this winter. Replace existing wiper blades at the beginning of each winter so driver visibility is not compromised.

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## How To Safely Navigate Wet Roads

Fall is a great time of year to hit the open road, as fall foliage is colorful and provides a wonderful backdrop for weekend getaways, while the mild temperatures of fall make this an ideal time to enjoy the great outdoors.

Though autumn is often a mild time of year with regard to weather, fall foliage enthusiasts can still encounter adverse conditions on road trips. According to the automotive group AAA, wet pavement contributes to nearly 1.2 million traffic accidents each year. When combined with fall leaves, wet pavement poses an even greater threat to drivers and their passengers.

Autumn and precipitation do not necessarily go hand in hand, but drivers should still exercise caution during the fall road trip season so they can better handle roadways that are wet and covered in fallen leaves.

- Do not use cruise control. Because fall foliage can be so stunning to experience, many drivers are tempted to use the cruise control feature on their automobiles so they can pay more attention to the array of colors at their disposal. But

cruise control should never be engaged when driving on wet roads or roads that may be covered in leaves. Such conditions require drivers to focus their undivided attention on the road ahead of them. When drivers suddenly encounter slick roads, easing off the accelerator rather than quickly applying the brakes can be the safest response, but such a response is impossible when cruise control is engaged.

- Drive slowly. Many fall road trippers are already driving slowly so they can fully enjoy the fall scenery. But it's important that drivers slow down even more when encountering wet roadways, as driving slow can reduce the risk of a vehicle hydroplaning. When vehicles hydroplane, they slide uncontrollably on wet surfaces as the tires rise up on the water covering the roads. AAA notes that tires on vehicles driving as slow as 35 miles per hour can still lose some contact with the road, so drivers should maintain low speeds when driving on wet roads and reduce their speeds even further during heavy rains.

- Resist the urge to brake quick-

ly. When drivers feel themselves losing control, many respond by braking quickly. But hard braking and quick turns can increase the risk that a vehicle will hydroplane. And even if the vehicle does not hydroplane, motorists may have a hard time controlling it when slamming on the brakes. When encountering wet roads, brake slowly and maintain low speeds until the roads dry off.

- Leave ample room between vehicles. Because braking quickly on wet roadways can increase the risk of accident, it's important that drivers leave ample room between their vehicles and the vehicles in front of them. Afford other drivers the space to brake slowly just like you hope the drivers behind you are doing. Avoid overcrowded roadways during especially wet weather.

Wet conditions during fall road trip season can be dangerous, and it's important that drivers learn to navigate wet roadways safely.

Wet weather can quickly compromise drivers' visibility, and it's imperative that drivers know how to safely navigate wet roads.





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## Properly Adjusted Mirrors Vastly Improves Safety

(MS) - Millions of motor vehicle accidents occur each year. While the motor vehicle industry places a great emphasis on safety, it's ultimately up to motorists to ensure their vehicle is as safe as possible.

Mirrors are an often overlooked aspect of safe driving. Properly adjusted rearview and side view mirrors improve visibility by reducing blind spots, which in turn reduces a driver's risk of being in an accident, especially on multi-lane highways where drivers may be forced to keep tabs on fellow motorists on both sides of their vehicles. When adjusting mirrors, consider the following tips to ensure your vehicle is as safe as possible.

\* Ensure optimal visibility from the interior rearview mirror. A properly adjusted rearview mirror allows drivers to see what's alongside and behind them, improving road awareness while reducing the risk of an accident. Most drivers know the rearview mirror should allow them to see out of the rear window from the driver's seat. But it's also important to utilize the day/night switch found on most rearview mirrors. Such a switch isn't an unnecessary accessory, but one that can reduce glare from cars behind you at night. Just be sure to flip the

switch back to the daytime setting in the morning to ensure maximum visibility.

\* Firmly secure the rearview mirror. Unfortunately, rearview mirrors are not always sturdy, as many vehicle manufacturers attach the rearview mirror to the windshield with a special button that is glued to the glass at the factory. This glue can come undone when drivers hit a pot-hole or just gradually weaken thanks to the ravages of heat, humidity or cold weather. When a rearview mirror comes unglued, drivers often look to a quick, yet temporary, solution like super glue or a high-strength adhesive. Such quick fixes are ineffective over the long haul, and drivers might find themselves driving down the street without a rearview mirror. Permatex(R) Rearview Mirror Adhesive was designed specifically for motorists looking for a permanent fix that ensures the rearview mirror will stay attached to the windshield regardless of external factors like the weather or poor road conditions. The adhesive employs a special formula that can easily withstand changing weather conditions and the thermal expansion that typically renders other glues and adhesives useless.

\* Don't overlook side view mirrors. A 1995 study from the Society of Automotive Engineers noted that, when positioned correctly, side view mirrors can help drivers see vehicles in their blind spots, eliminating a driver's need to glance over his or her shoulder when changing lanes. When adjusting the driver's side mirror, place the side of your head against the window, then adjust the mirror until the side of your vehicle comes into view. To adjust the passenger's side mirror, sit in the driver's seat, and then lean to the right so that your head is in the car's centerline. Adjust the mirror until the side of your vehicle comes into view. Once your mirrors have been adjusted and the rearview mirror is firmly secure, don't forget to use each of these mirrors when driving. Many drivers rely solely on their rearview mirrors to back up and change lanes on the highway. However, if all of your mirrors are aligned correctly, you should be able to see a vehicle leave the rearview mirror and move to one of the side view mirrors immediately. Diligent use of each mirror can help prevent accidents that occur when drivers change lanes.

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## What To Do With A Cracked Windshield

The scenario is all too common. Drivers are traveling down the road, and a pebble gets kicked up and hits into their windshield, causing a small chip to appear. Slowly but surely that chip turns into a spreading, snaking crack that only gets worse with each bump and pothole. Having a broken windshield is not only unsightly and a big inconvenience, it can also be illegal. That's because the crack reduces the efficacy of the window safety composition, meaning it may shatter in the event of an impact accident and cause extensive injuries. The crack also may impede a driver's ability to see the road clearly. It's important to note that liability car insurance typically doesn't cover a cracked windshield that occurs in a collision. Instead, drivers hoping to be covered need to have collision insurance on their vehicle. However, not all windshields crack in a car accident. Many are damaged in nonaccident related circumstances, whether

this be a tree branch that falls on the car or a rock kicked up from the roadway. It's important to read an insurance policy thoroughly to be sure that nonaccident related cracks to the windshield will be covered. Even if the damage is covered, it may not be worth the expense of paying the insurance deductible and filing a claim, which may end up raising your rate in the long run. Many small nicks can be repaired easily with a kit purchased from an automotive supply store. Inexpensive and user-friendly, the instructions guide users through the process of sealing the crack and preventing it from spreading. If the crack is beyond the scope of a do-it-yourself fix, a windshield repair service that specializes in this type of work might be necessary. These companies use products that harden quickly and reglaze the windshield so that the crack may not even be noticeable afterward.

Upon inspection, a mechanic or a windshield replacement company may determine that the crack is not something that can be mended. The entire windshield will have to be replaced at this point. In some cases the windshield can be removed and replaced in the same day. While there is no way to prevent a cracked windshield entirely, there are certain ways to reduce the risk. This includes avoiding running over any debris on the road that can be kicked back at the windshield. A windshield crack is something that should be remedied soon.



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### See And Be Seen: How Drivers Can See Better At Night And Make Themselves More Visible To Fellow Motorist

(MS) - Though fewer cars are on the road at night than during the daytime, driving at night is still dangerous. In fact, the National Safety Council notes that driver's risk of being in fatal car crashes is three times greater at night than it is during the daytime. While a host of factors combine to make driving at night less safe than driving during the daytime, poor nighttime visibility is one of the biggest contributors to driver discomfort at night. Depth perception, color recognition and peripheral vision can diminish at night. Though many drivers recognize that their own visibility is compromised at night, few may consider that others motorists' nighttime visibility is similarly affected. Fortunately, there are a handful of ways that drivers can improve their visibility and make themselves more visible to fellow motorists when operating motor vehicles after the sun goes down.

- Get enough sleep. A recent

poll from the National Sleep Foundation found that 13 percent of drivers acknowledged falling asleep while driving at least once per month. Poorly lit roadways and the absence of natural light can make tired drivers even more drowsy, furthering compromising their already diminished visibility. The NSF advises drivers to get between seven and nine hours of sleep per night, to avoid driving if they have been awake for 24 hours or more and to pull over for rest every two hours.

- Improve vehicle lighting. Compared to the standard incandescent lamps used by many of today's automotive manufacturers, LED lights are brighter and more visible to oncoming motorists. Unlike incandescent bulbs, Philips Vision LEDs remain bright and maintain their light intensity throughout the life of the lights. LEDs also can brighten up interior lights, such as courtesy,

dome, trunk and glove box. In addition, Vision LEDs were designed to be highly resistant to the extreme heat and vibrations that threaten standard incandescent bulbs, thereby increasing their durability and longevity.

- Get routine vision checkups. Vision checkups are necessary for all drivers, but especially so for aging motorists. According to the American Optometric Association, the diminished vision that many drivers experience when driving at night increases with age, highlighting the importance of annual vision checkups. The AOA also recommends that drivers minimize distractions when driving at night so they can better focus on the road ahead.
- Make your vehicle more visible. Even drivers who are comfortable driving at night must share the roads with other motorists, who may not be as relaxed driving after sundown.

Philips Vision LEDs turn on instantly and can be installed as replacements for manufacturers' brake and taillights, side markers, turn signals and back up lights, making vehicles more visible to fellow motorists and greatly decreasing reaction time. Brighter and therefore more visible to fellow drivers than standard incandescent bulbs, Vision LEDs employ instant-on response technology that can reduce braking distance by up to 20 feet at speeds as high as 75 miles per hour. Drivers who are uncomfortable driving at night can employ several strategies to alleviate that discomfort. More information is available at [www.philips.com/visionled](http://www.philips.com/visionled). response provided by Philips Vision LEDs can reduce braking distance by up to 20 feet at speeds of 75 miles per hour. Because they light up quicker, other drivers can see the vehicle sooner.

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Inspect Tires Before Fall Road Trips!

Road trips are an autumn tradition for many people. Excursions to see the fall foliage can be awe-inspiring, but drivers must make sure their vehicles can handle such jaunts. Tire inspections are essential before hitting the open road. The following are a handful of steps drivers can take to ensure their tires are up to the task of fall road trips.

- Give tires the eye test. The eye test can be an effective and

quick way to detect tire damage. Uneven wear may be indicative of insufficient tire pressure or an alignment problem. Uneven wear also may indicate the vehicle is experiencing problems with its steering or suspension. But many times uneven wear can be remedied by a simple tire rotation, so take your vehicle to your mechanic if you notice uneven wear.

- Look for stowaways. Uneven wear is not the only thing drivers can detect with their eyes. In the course of your travels, your tire might have picked up a few stowaways, such as nails and screws that are poking into the tire. If you find any freeloaders, take your car to your mechanic, as your tires may need to be replaced.
- Look for cracking or bulging treads. Cracking or bulging treads or sidewalls can eventually cause a blowout, which can put you and your fellow road trippers in serious jeopardy. Cracked or bulging treads or

sidewalls indicate tires are worn or weak, so bring your car to your mechanic for an inspection if you discover such problems.

- Perform the penny test. The penny test can help motorists determine if tire treads are worn. To perform the test, insert a penny with Abraham Lincoln's head pointing upward into the tread. If the tread does not reach the top of Lincoln's head, your tire's treads are worn.
- Check tire pressure. Right before you pack up the car to hit the open road, check each of your tires' pressure, making sure the pressure in each tire is at the level recommended in your owner's manual. Inflating tires to the proper pressure takes just a minute or so, but that minute can protect you and your passengers while also saving you money at the filling station. Properly maintained tires can go a long way toward ensuring the fall road trip season is a success.

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Cloudy Headlamps A Significant Safety Concern

(MS) - Many drivers feel less comfortable behind the wheel at night than they do during the day, when daylight makes it easier to see fellow motorists as well as pedestrians. Nighttime can compromise a driver's vision, and that reduced vision is a key factor in traffic fatalities, nearly half of which occur at night. Though traffic accidents are a byproduct of a host of factors, headlamp clouding is one of them and a growing problem for many motorists. Vehicles equipped with plastic headlamp lenses can become hazed and yellowed from the effects of sunlight, ozone, road pollution and the chemicals used in car washes. When driving at night, cloudy headlamps combine with little or no natural light to decrease visibility and pose a significant safety threat to drivers, their passengers and fellow motorists. Drivers cannot increase the amount of natural light at night, but there are steps they can take to improve their nighttime visibility. \* Address cloudy headlamps. Plastic headlamp lenses, especially as they age, reduce headlight output considerably, compromising nighttime vision and the safety of drivers and their passengers. But as potentially dangerous as cloudy headlamps can be, it's just as easy for drivers to address the issue before it becomes a problem. Employing an advanced technology that works with minimal effort, the Philips Headlight Restoration Kit is designed for do-it-yourselfers and can help restore headlight lenses to like-new condition in less than 30 minutes. In lieu of a costly headlamp replacement, the Philips Headlight Restoration Kit allows motorists to quickly and significantly improve the light output of their headlamps, taillights, turn signals and reflective lens covers. \* Keep wiper blades fresh. Vision is already compromised at night, when the lack of natural light can make it difficult to see pedestrians or animals on the road. That visibility is only further compromised by brittle or ineffective wiper blades, which should be changed every 90-120 days to ensure optimal performance. Drivers who live in areas with heavy rain or snowfall should inspect their wiper blades more frequently, especially if there is pitting on the windshield. \* Check the windshield washer periodically. The windshield washer is an often overlooked aspect of vehicle maintenance. Unfortunately, it's typically too late by the time many motorists notice an issue with their windshield washer. Don't fall victim to a faulty windshield washer in the middle of a rainstorm or a blizzard. Inspect the windshield washer periodically to ensure it's working properly and keep the fluid level topped off so it's there when you need it. \* Think ahead. In addition to addressing existing issues, drivers can take steps to ensure their nighttime visibility is protected over the long haul. The Philips Headlight Restoration Kit, for example, employs a protective UV coating that can prevent future clouding for up to two years. In addition to addressing the headlamps, consider how your visibility is likely to be affected during the worst possible snowstorm or on a night with torrential rains. Keep those conditions in mind when deciding whether or not to hang any fuzzy dice or other trinkets from your rearview mirror. While such items can add a touch of personality to your vehicle, the decreased visibility such items can cause is not worth the cost over the long haul. More information is available at www.philips.com/automotive. A cloudy headlight lens (left) before restoration and (right) a headlight lens restored to "like new" condition with the new Philips Headlight Restoration Kit.

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