

# car care 2015

## Protect your vehicle from snow, ice and damage from the cold



Scrapers should only be used on windows and not on the body of the car.

Winter can be an unforgiving season. Freezing temperatures coupled with snow and ice can take its toll on people who live in climates where cold weather is a fact of winter life.

While winter can test

people's patience, it also can be harsh on cars and trucks. Understanding what components of a vehicle can be compromised by dropping temperatures and snowy roads can help drivers take action to safeguard their

automotive investments.

While the Canadian Automobile Association notes that winter can wreak havoc on just about every part of a vehicle, there are some parts that seem to bear the brunt of Old Man Winter's

abuse. Properly servicing and caring for a car or truck can help.

Drivers should take their vehicles for a tuneup and inspection before wintry weather arrives. A mechanic will examine the car battery and check antifreeze levels and make sure that the thermostat, defroster, brakes, and even wiper blades are working effectively. Have the tires inspected for adequate tread, which can make navigating roads safer. If the treads are worn, replace the tires.

In addition to visiting their mechanics, drivers can perform some inspections and fixes themselves.

- Check that all of the vehicle's lights are operational so your car can be easily seen during inclement weather. Exchange your existing windshield washer fluid with one that will not freeze in cold conditions.

Check the nozzles on the windshield-washer system routinely and clear out any blockages of ice or debris. While addressing windshield washer fluid, also replace worn out windshield wiper blades with ones that can withstand snow and icy weather.

- A new coating of wax can serve as a shield against road salt, snow, sleet, and rain. Try a polymer wax to protect the paint. Whenever possible, rinse off salt and grime so it does not dry on the car and gradually wear away at the paint. Some drivers mistakenly believe that salt stops being a problem once it dries simply because moisture is the active ingredient for a corrosive reaction. But humidity in the air is enough to keep the salt eating away at the car's paint, and that can contribute to rust. Be sure to rinse off the undercarriage of the

vehicle as well.

- Have your tires' alignment checked toward the end of winter or early spring. A season of traveling over pothole-ridden roads or hitting curbs buried under snow drifts can affect the alignment. Get everything back on track. Similarly, inspect tires routinely, as weather changes can affect tire pressure and strength.

- Use a soft snow brush or a foam brush to clear snow off of the car. Avoid hard plastic scrapers you might use on your windshield, as they can scratch painted surfaces.

- Try to park the vehicle in a garage or under a car port, each of which can protect cars and trucks from the often harsh elements of winter.

Vehicles can be affected by the cold weather. Keep them running efficiently to prevent damage this winter.

## Gifts to rev auto lovers' engines

Auto lovers tend to consider their cars their most prized possessions. While it may not be possible to buy the auto lover on your holiday shopping list a new car, there are many gifts that are sure to please those people who can't get enough time behind the wheel or in the garage.

- \* Global positioning system: Often referred to as a GPS, a global positioning system is a satellite-based navigation system providing location information no matter where drivers find themselves on their next road trips. If a GPS is within range of a GPS satellite, drivers will never again find themselves pulling over on the sides of roadways in an effort to find out just where they are. Though many new vehicles come with GPS, vehicle manufacturers tend to offer them as accessories and not standard features. So if your favorite driver is driving an older vehicle or did not splurge on a GPS when purchasing his latest ride, this gift is sure to please.

- \* Car wash kit: Auto lovers not only love to get behind the wheel, but they also love to get behind the wheel of a good-looking automobile. A car wash kit, complete with a wash and wax that repels water and protects a good polish, is an ideal gift for auto enthusiasts who like their vehicles to look as good as they drive.

- \* Customized floor mats: Many auto enthusiasts consider their cars an extension of themselves, and a customized accessory, like a new set of floor mats, can add a personal touch to drivers' rides. If your loved one has a special nickname for his or her vehicle, consider inscribing that nickname on a set of customized floor mats. Auto enthusiasts who have an equal passion for a certain sport may appreciate floor mats with the logo of their favorite team.



- \* Hands-free headset: Car lovers spend lots of time in their cars. Though such time might once have afforded auto enthusiasts an escape from the daily grind, nowadays the prevalence of smartphones has made it easier than ever for the outside world to find its way into vehicles. As a result, auto enthusiasts may appreciate a hands-free headset that allows them to take calls while driving without compromising their concentration on the road. Some hands-free devices even allow drivers to stream music from their smartphones directly to their car stereos, allowing drivers to hit the

open road while enjoying their favorite tunes.

- \* Auto show tickets: Many auto-lovers keep an open eye for their next vehicle purchase. Auto shows are often the best places to learn about new vehicles and what motorists can expect in the future, so why not give your favorite car guy or gal tickets to an upcoming auto show? He or she may find his or her next vehicle or simply enjoy walking around and seeing all the latest automotive industry upgrades and gadgets.

## Warning signs a tire is about to go flat

Few drivers will be fortunate enough to go their entire driving lives without encountering at least one flat tire. Flat tires range from the inconvenient flats, which may interrupt a road trip or make drivers late for work or an appointment, to more dangerous blowouts, which can compromise the safety of drivers, their passengers and anyone else on the road when the tire gives out.

But as inconvenient or dangerous as flats or blowouts can be, they also can be prevented more often than not. Tires often produce warning signs that a flat or blowout is about to emerge, so drivers who want to avoid such unfortunate developments can inspect their tires for the following signs.

- Varying wear: Tires should exhibit the same type of wear. The wear on front tires and back tires may differ, but one front tire should have the same amount of wear as the other and the same goes for the back tires. Uneven tread on tires indicates that the tire with more wear could be about to go out.

- Worn tread: Even driv-

ers who know little about cars can typically recognize when tire tread has worn down to the point where the tire is a safety risk. But drivers who are unsure can employ the quarter test. Insert a quarter into the tread of the tire, with George Washington's head upright. If you can see the hairline of the United States' first president, then you need to replace the tire. Perform this test on each of your vehicle's four tires.

- Low pressure: Drivers who do not routinely check their tire pressure are more likely to endure a flat or blowout than those who regularly make sure their tires are at the manufacturer-

recommended pressure, which can be found in a vehicle owner's manual or by calling the tire manufacturer or visiting their website. An underinflated tire is under stress that can cause the tire to blowout. In addition, poorly inflated tires force engines to work harder, which negatively affects a car's fuel efficiency.

- Vibration: A car that vibrates excessively may do so because tires are damaged. Poor suspension is another cause of excessive vibration. Whatever is behind a car that is vibrating, drivers should immediately take the car to their mechanic for an inspection.

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