



# CAR CARE CORNER

## Don't "Fall" Behind: It Pays To Stay Ahead Before The Temperature Drops

(NAPSA)—Seasonal car care planning and preventative maintenance can save you money and time as the weather changes.

"Timely maintenance does more than keep your vehicle running smoothly," says Pat Goss, longtime mechanic and owner of Goss' Garage in Seabrook, Md., as well as co-host of the PBS television show "MotorWeek." "It will save you money in both the short- and long-term because you are improving your vehicle's trade-in value, getting the most out of its mileage and preventing costly repairs down the road."

In addition to keeping cash in your pockets, performing routine maintenance and using quality products can help drivers stay safe through even the nastiest of conditions. Maintenance plays a big role in staying safe—according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, about one in eight crashes can be attributed to mechanical defects due to neglected vehicle maintenance.

To avoid costly repairs and ensure your safety in preparation for harsh conditions, prep in advance by following a few simple guidelines:

### Early Fall

- **Tune-Ups**—Get a full engine tune-up, as outlined in your owner's manual.

- **Fix The Brakes**—Don't postpone needed brake work. Avoiding brake repair can be extremely dangerous, and if you procrastinate, you may end up damaging your rotors and incurring considerably more repair cost.

- **Get An Oil Change**—"Motor oil is the lifeblood of every vehicle," says Goss. "Replacing your current oil with a synthetic product that is specifically designed for longer oil change intervals, such as Mobil 1 Extended Perform-



**Maintaining your car from season to season can help extend its life and prevent breakdowns.**

mance, helps to extend the life of your car. It is guaranteed to protect critical engine parts for up to 15,000 miles. Bear in mind, if you plan to go longer between oil changes, it is vital to follow the maintenance schedule for service to your brakes, tires, battery and other systems."

### Mid to Late Fall

- **Check The Battery**—If a battery is older than four years, it may not work well in cold weather. When in doubt, replace it.

- **Check Filters, Coolants and Hoses**—Make sure all filters (oil, gas and air) are in good condition. Check the coolant and thermostat to ensure proper engine warm-up, and make sure your heater and defroster work. Coolant should be changed every two years, though the extended-life coolants used in many newer vehicles last about five years. Check for leaking or soft hoses and replace as needed.

- **Emergencies**—Put together an emergency kit containing gloves, boots, blankets, flares, a small shovel, sand or kitty litter (handy for providing traction on slippery surfaces), tire chains, a flashlight and a cell phone. You may also want to put a few "high-

energy" snacks in your glove box.

### Late Fall

- **Tire Pressure**—Check tires for excessive wear and proper inflation. Be careful not to under-inflate or over-inflate tires. Low pressure increases wear and fuel consumption, while too much pressure can reduce traction, especially in icy conditions. As the weather gets cooler, your air pressure decreases.

- **Icy Windows and Locks**—Make sure to have window ice scrapers and de-icers available. Also make sure your windshield wipers and front and rear defrosters are working properly. A de-icer for door locks is also useful.

- **Slow Down**—Do not exceed speed limits and keep safe driving distances. Unnecessary speedups, slowdowns and stops can decrease fuel economy by up to two miles per gallon. Avoid gas-wasting jackrabbit starts and pace your driving to help avoid the need for sudden stops, which is especially critical during wet and icy road conditions.

- **Vehicle Warm-Up**—To ensure proper engine oil flow and lubrication, allow your engine to idle for a few seconds before driving in cold weather, and drive slowly for the first few miles until the oil is fully warmed up. In addition to being good for your engine, this practice reduces emissions and saves fuel.

"There's no reason to put off what you can accomplish today—and why wait until it's bitter out?" says Goss. "Your car will be more reliable throughout the winter if properly cared for in the fall months."

For more information on vehicle maintenance, check out these Web sites, [www.gossgarage.com](http://www.gossgarage.com), [www.mobiloil.com](http://www.mobiloil.com), [www.nhtsa.gov](http://www.nhtsa.gov).