

Car Care Corner

Winter Car Care Tips from the Pros

(NAPSA)—With the arrival of fall, it's time to put on an old flannel shirt and jeans and get your vehicle ready for the colder weather ahead. And that includes those beefy SUVs; they need winter maintenance, too. Here's advice from the nonprofit National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE), the group that certifies automotive technicians. Any weekender can perform some of the tips; a few will require the skilled hands of an auto technician.

Basics—Read your owner's manual and follow the manufacturer's recommended service schedules.

Fuel—Put a bottle of fuel de-icer in your tank once a month to help keep moisture from freezing in the fuel line.

Oil—Change your oil and oil filter as specified in your manual—more often (every 3,000 miles or so) if your driving is mostly stop-and-go or consists of frequent short trips. In cold climates, you'll need winter grade oil.

Cooling System—The cooling system should be flushed and refilled as recommended. The level, condition, and concentration of the coolant should be checked periodically. (A 50/50 mix of anti-freeze and water is usually recommended.) Never remove the radiator cap until the engine has thoroughly cooled! The tightness and condition of drive belts, clamps, and hoses should be checked by a pro.

Engine Performance—Get engine driveability problems (hard starts, rough idling, stalling, diminished power, etc.) corrected at a good repair shop. Cold weather makes existing problems worse. Replace dirty filters—air, fuel, PCV, etc.

Heater/Defroster—The heater and defroster must be in good working condition for passenger comfort and driver visibility.

Battery—Routine care: Scrape away corrosion from posts and cable connections; clean all surfaces; re-tighten all connections. Avoid contact with corrosive



deposits and battery acid. Wear eye protection and rubber gloves.

Exhaust System—Your vehicle should be placed on a lift and the exhaust system examined for leaks. The trunk and floorboards should be inspected for small holes. Exhaust fumes can be deadly.

Tires—Worn tires will be of little use in winter weather. Examine tires for remaining tread life, uneven wearing, and cupping; check the sidewalls for cuts and nicks. Check tire pressure once a month. Rotate as recommended. Don't forget your spare, and be sure the jack is in good condition.

Emergencies—Carry gloves, boots, blankets, flares, a small shovel, sand or kitty litter, tire chains, a flashlight, and a cell phone. Put a few "high-energy" snacks in your glove box.

The National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) was founded in 1972 as a nonprofit, independent organization dedicated to improving the quality of automotive service and repair through the voluntary testing and certification of automotive technicians. ASE-certified technicians wear blue and white ASE shoulder insignia and carry credentials listing their exact area(s) of certification. Their employers often display the blue and white ASE sign. Visit www.ase.com for more information.