



Gary Robertson sprays the insides of a Chevrolet pick-up truck with an oil-based undercoating in Superlube's on Armstrong Avenue. The oil based undercoating is popular in the fall because it helps protect against the damaging effects of salt in the winter. (Herald photo)

Protect Your Car...

Oil undercoating and thinner oil help to fight off winter

By ALAN MACKIE
Herald Special

With winter sneaking over Georgetown drivers will start to see the salt trucks sneaking onto the roads. Since salt is one of the main factors in the corrosion of automobiles, John Hamilton, the owner of Superlube on Armstrong Avenue, said it is important to protect your car by undercoating it.

If you do decide to get your vehicle undercoated, Mr. Hamilton recommends the use of an oil-based undercoating once a year and said he does a lot of them during the autumn season.

The undercoating has to be sprayed under the car, in the doors, under the quarter-panels, "spray everywhere rust can get in."

Undercoating is not the only thing needed to prepare a car for winter, Mr. Hamilton said. Most new cars have switched to 5W30 oil because it's a thin oil and "gets up to the top" of the engine quicker, he explained.

Scott Andrew, manager of Mountainview Road's Speedy Muffler, agreed with Mr.

Hamilton adding that thicker oils "find it hard to circulate around the system." For older cars Mr. Andrew recommends 10W30.

Both Mr. Hamilton and Mr. Andrew said that oil changes should be more frequent in winter. Mr. Hamilton said the cold weather, snow and ice force the car to work harder and generally people let their cars idle longer when they start them.

Something most people do not think of is checking their transmission fluid, Mr. Hamilton said. "Winter driving is very hard on cars' transmissions because your slipping on the ice."

Lubricating is also a necessary part of winterizing your vehicle, Mr. Hamilton said. "Lubricating protects against hinges and cables freezing up." The lubricant sets up like a fine grease so it doesn't get hard or break up, but stays pliable.

Mr. Hamilton also recommends that you should "grease it every time you change the oil."

Mr. Andrew said, "There's

really not much you can do to winterize the exhaust system."

Two preventive maintenance tips Mr. Andrew gave were to keep the exhaust pipes well washed and not to take short tips. Salt that gets kicked up on to the pipes can lie there for quite some time he explained. The way to prevent this is to spray under the car when you get it washed. If the salt is not cleared it could lead to rust problems, Mr. Andrew warned.

Short trips are bad because the moisture in the system can only be removed by evaporation, therefore the car has to be properly heated to stop the moisture from freezing and damaging the exhaust pipes, Mr. Andrew said. The preventive measure for this is to let the car heat up properly.

One last problem Mr. Andrew can foresee is with the shocks. The oil in the shocks can freeze and can blow the seals at the top of the piston. Mr. Andrew said there are new nitrogen gas shocks that respond to the road better than the oil-shocks and will not freeze as easy.

Car interiors need protection from winter's damaging effects

As summer sun becomes winter cold, environmental hazards take their toll on your car's interior. The vinyl and leather that covers your car's seats, dashboard and door panels is subjected to the natural weathering process — just like the paint and finish. Therefore, it's important to pay attention to your car's interior and provide it with the proper care.

Winter weather conditions can make vinyl and leather brittle and cause them to crack. Mud, sand, salt, snow and rain dull a shine and scratch a car just as easily on the inside as on the outside.

Caring for your car's interior is inexpensive and simple. Just a few minutes of work each month can add years to the life of your car's vinyl and finished leather, increase its resale value, and keep it looking sharp throughout the year.

STP®, the makers of Son of a Gun! Vinyl Protectant, offer the following tips to help make your car glisten all year long.

A cleaner and protectant

Dirt that builds up as a result of normal daily activity should be removed before a vinyl protectant is applied. Spray any area of your car that is exposed — even the tires and bumpers. Then, wipe away the solution with a

soft cloth. STP Son of a Gun! Vinyl Protectant also eliminates static electricity to reduce dirt attraction.

A vinyl protectant also provides a buffer zone between the vinyl and potentially damaging elements that can wear down and scratch the interior. In addition, it brings out color, restores lost luster and helps prevent drying that leads to unsightly cracks in the vinyl.

Regular maintenance schedule

The best way to maintain a new car shine is to start using a vinyl protectant when your car is new. Don't fret if your car is a few years old; a vinyl protectant can still be effective even if deterioration and scratches have already set in.

HAVE A QUALIFIED MECHANIC CHECK YOUR BRAKES

If your car is pushing 30 to 40 thousand miles, you may be pushing on a brake pedal that's soft and squishy. You owe it to yourself and to the safety of your family to have a qualified technician check over the master cylinder, brake lines and hoses, calipers and wheel cylinders... plus lining and pads. Car Care Council recommends that, when you need a brake job, you have it done by a qualified mechanic.

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