

Is your battery cranky? Here are some answers...

When the cold weather comes, most of us slow down a little and do some good old Canadian grumbling. Your car battery is no exception. Your engine is more dependent on electrical power than ever before. It seems as though every single engine function runs off a computer. All those computers, electrical clocks, etc. maintain a power drain on the battery, whether you drive the car or not. That's why you can sometimes end up with a flat battery (even if you didn't leave the lights on) after a

long ski trip, for example. Here are some common questions and answers: *What's the white powder that I see on my battery terminals?* That powder is corrosion, and it acts as an insulator. When you get enough of it on the battery posts, no current can get through and your car won't start. You can clean it off with a wire brush, or with battery post cleaners available at all automotive stores. You can also use a solution of baking soda, which will counteract the acid in the electrolyte. When the

posts are clean, give them a coating of battery terminal grease to keep the corrosion from recurring. *My battery is called maintenance free, but it isn't really, is it?* Actually, yes. Other than keeping corrosion off the terminals, there is very little you need to do to a good battery. It's no longer necessary to check each pot and top up with distilled water. The battery pretty much holds its own electrolyte level. Here's how the battery works. It consists of lead oxide on the positive plates, lead on the negative

plates, submerged in an electrolyte (dilute sulphuric acid). The chemical reaction be-

tween the plates within the electrolyte creates the electricity, and the reaction re-

verses when the battery is charging so that the components regenerate themselves.



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