

Winter CAR CARE

Emergency Survival Depends on How Vehicle Has Been Prepared

Could you and your passengers survive being stranded in one of those severe winter storms?

Every year we hear about the plight of motorists caught on the road in blizzards. The results can be traumatic; if not fatal.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency offers a checklist which could help travelers survive such a situation. At the top of the list is the car itself. You should keep your car in top operating condition all year round—for safety and fuel economy. Keep your car running smoothly with this six-point checklist:

Vital Checks

1. Battery and electrical system: A battery that's 100 percent efficient at 80 degrees Fahrenheit will be only 64 percent efficient at 30 degrees and only 33 percent efficient at -10 degrees.

If your car has been slow to start, have the battery and charging system checked. Often you may find the trouble is no more serious than a corroded or loose battery connection.

2. Fuel and ignition systems: How long has it been since you've had a tuneup? When starting a cold engine, much of the car's available battery power is diverted to the starter, so there may not be enough voltage left in the system to fire worn spark plugs.

New plugs nearly always are part of a tuneup. Periodic tuneups can ferret out those parts that should be replaced to prevent failure in cold weather. Hairline cracks in the distributor cap or rotor, for example, or faulty wiring are notorious for this. On cars with distributor breaker points and condenser, regular attention to tuneup services is especially critical.

Keep the gas tank as full as possible to minimize condensation. Freezing of moisture in the fuel system can cut off fuel flow.

3. Cooling system: Be sure that the system is clean, that you have adequate antifreeze protection and that all hoses and belts are in good condition.

4. Oil: Clean oil of the correct weight, or viscosity, is important to cold-weather starting. In all but the most frigid temperatures, 10W-30 or 10W-40 are recommended. In temper-

atures consistently below 0 degrees Fahrenheit, 5W-20 may be preferable.

5. Tires: Tire tread condition is crucial when driving on ice and snow. Also check inflation. Tire pressure decreases one pound for every 10 degree drop on the thermometer. If you haven't checked your tires since the thermometer read in the 60s and 70s, they may be seriously underinflated.

6. Windshield wipers and lights: Keep plenty of windshield washer/antifreeze solvent in the reservoir. How are your wiper blades? Consider installing winter blades, which feature rubber boots to prevent ice buildup on the blades. Be sure all your lights are working and occasionally clean off road dirt and salt.

Carry Kit

Create a winter survival kit and keep it in the car. This is especially important if you live in or are traveling through the northern climates. The kit should include:

1. Battery booster cables;
2. Blankets, sleeping bags or something to keep you warm;
3. Matches and candles;
4. Two 3-pound coffee cans, one for sanitary purposes and the other to hold candles which could be burned for heat;
5. Paper towels;
6. First aid kit with pocket knife;
7. Flashlight with extra batteries;
8. Small sack of sand;
9. Tire chains;
10. Shovel;
11. Food supply (high calorie, nonperishable food such as canned nuts, dried fruit, candy, etc.);
12. Tools;
13. Windshield scraper;
14. Transistor radio with extra battery;
15. Hand-held citizens band (CB) radio.



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