



### Safety first

Willie Wilfling is working on a truck at Alex's Service Center. Willie has been a mechanic for 25 years. He and Dan Dohmer explained how to prepare for winter driving.

## Car maintenance saves lives

Many motorists, stranded by a broken down automobile, look at the problem as an inconvenience. But it also can be a hazard, Ernest Bates, chief of the Midland Police Department, points out.

So Dan Dohmer and Willie Wilfling of Alex's Service Center offered some tips for avoiding car breakdown.

Brakes are the number one priority for Dohmer. "If the engine cuts out on you, you can coast to a stop," he noted. "But if the brakes let go, it's very hard to bring a car to a stop."

He advised drivers to get brakelines checked. When they get rusty, they can leak, causing the loss of brake fluid and the brakes can give out completely, he warned.

Tire tread should be checked, especially in the winter, Dohmer advised. But don't rely on tread to help you on ice, he cautioned: "Snow tires don't help on ice."

Dohmer and Wilfling stressed the importance of visibility.

"Make sure your rear defroster works," said Wilfling.

The front end parts -- steering linkage and tie

rod ends -- are vital to control because "if they happen to pop out, you'd have no steering," Dohmer noted.

Both men pointed out the vital role of belts and hoses. If the power steering belt breaks, steering gets very stiff, they said.

If the alternator belt goes, the car runs off the battery, causing it to go dead very quickly, they explained.

"If the hoses go, it can drain all your anti-freeze. If you don't catch it in time, the engine will seize up," Dohmer said.

A couple of year-round cautions from Dohmer:

Check the exhaust system because a small hole could lead to carbon monoxide poisoning from fumes that get into the car. And never open the radiator cap on a hot engine.

"If you're experiencing heating problems, don't go near the rad cap," he said. "It can blow up on you."

## Safety week

The Great Canadian Challenge is the theme of this year's National Safe Driving Week sponsored by the Canada Safety Council.

Each year more than 4,000 Canadians die in traffic-related accidents, the council reports. Combined traffic fatalities and injuries number more than 254,000 annually in Canada, it says, and property damage collisions are over 750,000.

## Winter weather menace

Chief Ernest Bates of the Midland Police Department reminds drivers that the police have been running the Reduce Impaired Drivers Everywhere (RIDE) program approximately three days a week.

"We're going to put more hours on the RIDE program between now and Christmas," he said.

Many people are starting to celebrate Christmas parties at work, he noted. His advice is leave the car and take a cab or appoint a designated driver.

Drinking and driving don't mix any time he added, but it's even more important during the holiday season.

Midland OPP Constable Hannon said the Ontario Provincial Police have a RIDE program which moves around Simcoe County and the district of Muskoka.

"Every day they're going to be in a different spot," he said.

Everything about winter driving is different -- your car, the roads, other drivers, visibility. Your attitude should be different too, warns the Canada Safety Council.

Bates confirmed this view.

"Our weather changes can be at the spur of the moment," he said. "You can park your car in good weather but come out and there's snow or freezing rain. Your driving habits have to change with the weather and road conditions."

Bates warned against jumping in the car after an overnight frost or snow without first cleaning the windows.

"Not just a hole in the front window," he said. He points out that you need to be able to see through the back and sides as well.

Bates also suggests motorists should prepare their vehicles for winter driving because a stranded car is a road hazard.

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