

MAINTENANCE



Driving in a Deep Freeze

Cars are like humans in a lot of ways. They don't like extremely cold weather, they need regular maintenance, and they break when abused. Fortunately, with a little care both can be kept running well.

Our cars suffer from extreme temperatures almost hard to imagine. During winter months the under hood temperatures of our vehicles can climb from -20 below zero to 230 degrees above in a short period of time. This happens over and over again each week as we proceed with our daily commutes putting a huge strain on vehicle components.

When a vehicle is parked overnight, the oils that are the lifeblood of the engine and drive- train drains down into the lower portions of the components leaving the critical areas they protect exposed. Most engine and drive-train wear occurs during initial start-up and the colder the temperature is the more wear occurs. To help prevent start-up damage you should keep your oil changed regularly and always use only the oil weight recommended by the manufacturer of your vehicle. Another good idea if your car sits outside would be a engine block heater for days where the temp falls below zero. This will get the oil flowing faster and protect the critical components.



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Some other critical areas affected by the cold are belts and hoses, including timing belts and brake hoses. On our weekly Under The Hood® radio show we often use a garden hose as a reference to automotive parts. It just seems to fit as a great reference when it comes to automotive applications so I will use it here. Have you ever tried to bend a very cold but not yet frozen garden hose? The cold affects all the rubber parts on your vehicle the same way. An old and worn garden hose may break if bent when it is very cold and that is what can happen with your car as well. Belts and hoses usually have an effective life span of about 5 years depending on mileage. A belt or hose in good condition can take the cold starts while one that is approaching end of life may break when the temps fall below zero. A broken radiator hose is messy but replaceable, a

broken timing belt often results in major expensive engine damage, and a broken brake hose is unsafe. It is a wise idea to have belts and hoses inspected for wear at least each fall and spring for safety. At our shop we see most belt and hose failure in the winter months.

Batteries are another component that seems to die in the winter. It is not the cold but rather the summer heat that breaks down the battery eventually leading to a no start condition when the high loads of winter starts are placed upon it. You can have a battery tested before it fails to determine its overall condition.

Overall the best advice I can give is a little preventative maintenance and TLC will go a long way with both you and your vehicle. Properly warm them both up before use, and you get out of them what you put into them.

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