

# MAINTENANCE



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## Is Your Vehicle Ready for Winter?

When the cold wintery weather is upon us, will your car be ready to handle it?

The cold weather takes a toll on our vehicles but if properly checked the chance of a breakdown can be greatly reduced. You may be saying to yourself, I haven't had my vehicle checked and I've always been ok. Well, that may be true but take a few things into consideration. How new is the car you are talking about? If the vehicle is only a year or two old then it should be in fairly good shape yet if it has had any kind of preventative maintenance. There's always the luck factor too. Overall the fleet of cars on the road is aging due to many factors. With people keeping their vehicles longer than they have been accustomed to, their maintenance routine will need to change to match their vehicles requirements.

Once a vehicle reaches about two years old or 24,000 miles maintenance items start to become due. If you choose to bypass the scheduled maintenance you should at least check on the condition of the items. Some people choose to wait until there is a warning when prevention could have made the situation avoidable. Most of us don't exercise regularly and eat right and when the doctor tells us we have high cholesterol or heart trouble we are probably not surprised. A little prevention could probably help that too.

Several things can be checked at home while others may require a local mechanic but are still quick and easy and affordable as repairs go. Check these items over to help keep your car starting and running well on the coldest of days.

1. At home start with the tires, they should be free from cracks, cuts, missing tread, or severe wear spots. If the tires look good overall but you are not sure of the tread wear



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then here's a quick way to tell. 2/32 is very low and means replacement time. If you stick a penny in the tread and part of the top of Lincoln's head is covered you have 2/32 left. If you use a quarter and part of Washington's head is covered then you have 4/32 left.

Around the upper Midwest with ice and slush conditions the more tread you have, the better the grip and stopping power will be. Tread depth can affect the stopping distance of a car by dozens of feet on anything other than dry ground. In short, the more tread the better.

2. Check your air filter. A restricted air filter makes a car less efficient and contributes to engine deposits which rob power and can cause hard starts due to unburned fuel leaving them.

3. Inspect your belts and hoses for cracks and also for breakdown. If a belt has minor cracks on the driven side it

means the belt is nearing its life end. If the belt is covered with deep cracks and chunks are missing from the drive side or the back side it should be replaced right away.

Hoses should be free from cracks, leaks, and when you rub them with your fingers hose material should not come off. If any of these occur replace the hose.

4. Check your coolant. Test for proper freeze point protection and also for condition. The coolant will pick up metals from the cooling system and become corrosive after a period of 24 to 60 months and should be tested with a test strip available at the auto parts each year. The proper mix of coolant is 50/50 be sure to use only the factory specified coolant your vehicle calls for.

5. Check your wipers and washers, the first snow fall is not the time to find

they just smear the glass and there is no washer available.

These are just a few of the things you can check yourself. It is always a good idea to have a shop check the vehicle over for winter. Many repair shops including ours offer a free winter inspection and will make recommendations to help keep you safe during winter travel.

If you have a car question or want to know something in your vehicle works email Russ Evans the address is [help@underthehoodshow.com](mailto:help@underthehoodshow.com) Listen to our syndicated automotive advice show Under The Hood Each week on KELO am 1320 Thursdays at 10:00am and Sundays at 5:00pm Outside of the area you can find us on 22 stations covering eight states. Find a station near you by going to our all new web site [www.underthehoodshow.com](http://www.underthehoodshow.com). <sup>TMM</sup>