WINNER MAINTENANCE Checklist for Your Vehicle

The following is a list of instructions you should take to prepare your car for the winter season:

1. Have a set of high-quality winter tires installed. Thanks to their deep tread and soft compound, winter tires are vastly superior to all-season tires for winter driving, and should be installed regardless of whether your car is rear wheel drive, front wheel drive, or all-wheel drive. They should ideally be installed on their own set of rims (plus 4) and checked for proper balance, alignment, and tire pressure.

2. This is a good time to have your car thoroughly checked over as problems tend to be more apparent when winter rolls around. Have the belts, hoses, brakes, and suspension all checked for wear and proper function. Brake rotors and pads can take on a lot of these components, which is why they should be inspected carefully.

3. Make sure all the fluids are clean and topped up. The coolant should be checked for strength and quality to ensure the cooling system will function properly. If the coolant is more than 5 years old, consider a full cooling system flush. The windshield washer system should be filled with fresh, resistant to antifreeze, and the windshield washer blades should be inspected and replaced if necessary.

4. If your vehicle is due for an oil change, perform a full oil and filter change. Generally this should take place approximately every 6 to 8 months or 10,000 miles, however, the interval does vary from vehicle to vehicle. Follow the severe maintenance schedule in your vehicle’s owner’s manual. Oil that is 2 years or older should never be used. Synthetic oil is recommended over mineral oil in all vehicles because it helps ease engine starting on those cold mornings, as well as improves overall engine protection.

5. The cold temperatures of winter put a lot of strain on your car’s battery. No one wants to get stuck in a cold parking lot with a dead battery, which is why you should have the battery checked and loaded tested for proper functioning. Also, have the charging system, aka the alternator, checked to make sure its working and it is charging the battery properly. As a general guide, car batteries last 4-5 years, so consider having your battery changed if it is older than that.

6. Make sure that all the instruments, lights, electronics, and heater controls are all operating properly.

7. It is a good idea to prepare for emergencies and carry a compact shovel, road salt, a bottle of windshield washer fluid, and a first aid kit and some water when you know you will be driving in bad weather. Article courtesy carehpcanada.com

Here are five vehicle maintenance tips that will keep your vehicle running efficiently and reduce its environmental impact:

- KEEP YOUR VEHICLE PROPERLY TUNED FOR OPTIMUM PERFORMANCE. Regular tune-ups and maintenance will help your vehicle pollute less and burn less fuel. A tune-up can improve gas mileage by an average of four percent, while fixing a serious maintenance issue, such as a faulty oxygen sensor, can improve gas mileage by up to 40 percent. If the temperature drops below -15°C consider using a block heater. This reduces stress on your vehicle’s engine and heats up the cabin quicker.

- CHECK YOUR TIRES. Tires that are not properly inflated require your engine to work harder to move your vehicle and, therefore, to burn more gas. This increases fuel costs and increases the risk of engine damage. Check your vehicle’s owner’s manual to find its optimal tire pressure, and check the pressure whenever there are significant changes in temperature. Take your car in for a checkup, especially if you are planning on taking long road trips.

- CHECK YOUR VEHICLE’S GAS CAP. Gas caps that are loose, damaged or missing can cause gas to evaporate, which harms the environment and increases your vehicle’s emissions. If the coolant is more than 5 years old, consider a full cooling system flush. Replace dirty air filters, and check your coolant every 2 years. If your vehicle is due for an oil change, perform a full oil and filter change.

- HAVE SPARK PLUGS CHECKED AND REPLACED IF NECESSARY. Spark plugs wear out over time, and as they get older, they lose their ability to spark properly. This affects your engine’s performance and results in a loss of power. A misfiring spark plug can reduce your vehicle’s fuel efficiency by up to 30 percent.

- PREPARE YOUR CAR FOR THE WINTER SEASON. Put your vehicle in the hands of Rich Boyz Mechanical Ltd for winter maintenance.

- REFRIGERATION TIP: To keep your perishable items fresh, keep your refrigerator freezer set at or slightly below freezing to minimize energy consumption.