



Winter is Coming

Ralph Seekins

Well . . . the leaves are changing and the days are getting shorter. Our landscape will soon change to white until sometime next April. Cold weather is soon upon us. Those of us who have been here in the Interior for a year or two know that NOW is when we need to start getting our cars and trucks ready for the rigors of the long Alaska winter. I've previously written two articles on getting ready for winter. You can review them (i.e., Getting Ready for Winter Part I and Part II) at www.seekins.com and then clicking on the Column Archive button. Let's briefly review some of the getting ready for winter suggestions contained in those more detailed articles.

A minimum sub-arctic winter package includes an engine heater, a battery warmer, an engine oil pan sump heater and a transmission pan heater all connected to a single cold weather cord that is securely attached to the grill area of the vehicle. (Ever get tired of explaining to "outside" visitors what those electric cords are for? "No. They're not electric vehicles.")

Then, make sure the engine

coolant is in good condition and is the correct mixture for our severe cold temperatures. We recommend a water/coolant mixture that is good down to no less than -65 degrees Fahrenheit.

Check your vehicle's battery for age and condition. Make sure the terminals are clean and in good condition and seriously consider changing the battery if it is in the four year old range.

Quickly check the under-hood belts and hoses before cold weather hits. Belts with severe cracks or missing sections should be replaced as should hoses that are squishy or cracked. When replacing one belt or hose, replace them all. You'll be glad you did.

Windshield wipers should be checked for condition and, if wear is detected, they should be replaced prior to cold weather arrival. Then, make sure the windshield wiper anti-freeze reservoir is full. Pick up a supply of anti-freeze and keep it handy at home.

Pick up some gas line anti-freeze for your gasoline powered vehicle or some anti-gel and performance-improver for any diesel powered vehicles. A half bottle of gas line anti-freeze or anti-gel every couple of fill ups will keep frozen condensation from plugging your fuel lines in super-cold weather.

Check your vehicle's light bulbs and electrical system fuses now. Good lighting is very important in winter since your vehicle will use those lights for longer parts of the day than in summer.

Consider having a winter front installed and use it once the temperatures dip below zero Fahrenheit. Your engine will run better and longer and you and your passengers will stay warmer.

Get your regular oil and filter change scheduled now. And, while you are in for that regular service consider changing both the air filter, fuel filter and cabin air filter. Our dusty summers can max out the filter capacity and good air flow to the engine will help keep your fuel costs down all winter long.

Finally, it's time to schedule getting your winter tires installed. Studded tires, if you use them, are legal everywhere in Alaska from October 1st through April 15th. Every year there is a huge back-up at all the tire shops just after the first snow sticks to the roads. Plan ahead here for both safety and convenience.

We have addressed winter fronts, wiper blades, auto starts, winter safety items to carry in your vehicle and more in various other articles. These can also be reviewed in the Column Archive section of the Seekins.com website. For a no-obligation review, please feel free to stop by our Quick Lane Tire and Auto Center. Regardless of make or model, we want your vehicle ready for safe driving all winter long.

Ralph Seekins has more than 42 years' experience in the automotive industry. He started as a mechanic, worked in sales, and for the past 35 years, has been the owner of Seekins Ford Lincoln.

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