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CarMD® Provides Preventative Maintenance Tips To Help Drivers Prepare For A Safe Winter Driving Season

FOUNTAIN VALLEY, Calif. (Sept. 22, 2010) – It may be sunny outside now, but the snow, sleet and rain of the winter driving season is just around the corner, and with it comes an increase in weather-related auto accidents and maintenance needs. CarMD.com Corp., a leading provider of consumer automotive information, today announced a list of simple steps drivers can take to help ensure their cars and trucks are ready for a safe winter driving season.

“Mother nature can be cruel on vehicles, particularly during the winter months,” says Art Jacobsen, director at CarMD and longtime winter road warrior. “Twenty-four percent of vehicle crashes and 17 percent of crash fatalities are weather related, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Another unlucky 13 percent of auto accidents are due to mechanical failures. By spending just a little time and money on preventative measures now, consumers can minimize the possibility of a much more costly problem later in the season. It’s better to catch a problem while you’re in the warmth of your garage, than to find yourself broken down on the side of the road in the dead of winter.”

CarMD’s Winter Preventative Maintenance Tips

Created by the certified Automotive Service Excellence technicians at CarMD, the following list provides simple preventative measures for vehicle owners to help prepare their cars for a safe winter driving season:

- **Winter Check Up** – A pre-winter check-up should be done in the fall, before the mercury starts to drop. It should cover an oil change, air filter replacement, valve adjustment, spark plug inspection, and tire rotation and balance. In addition, a winter tune-up should include: a clean fuel filter; inspection for leaks that may not be visible later when the weather is freezing, a test to make sure your heater is working and check to make sure your coolant mixture is good enough to cover lower temperatures. Frozen water can lead to cracked radiators very easily, which can cost you some green. If you own a [CarMD® Vehicle Health System](#), it’s a good idea to run a seasonal scan on your vehicle to make sure there are no pending problems, technical service bulletins or recalls that need to be addressed before the weather turns cold. Also, keep your fuel tank at least half full during the winter to avoid fuel line freeze-up problems. Winter will definitely expose any compromised systems in your vehicle. Deal with them now, and save time and money.
- **Battery** – Car batteries rarely signal failure ahead of time, but those cold cranking amps are working harder than ever to get your car started in the winter. Batteries are highly vulnerable in the winter. Summer is very damaging from a durability standpoint, and winter requires the absolute best performance from your battery to start the vehicle. Minivans and SUVs require more cold cranking amps to start those larger engines. While it’s inconvenient to have a no-start in the summer, the consequences are more serious if you can’t start your car and the temperature drops below freezing, especially with small children in the car. If your vehicle is taking a long time to start or the battery is more than three years old, consider replacing the battery. You can check your battery charge with an affordable battery tester that plugs right into your cigarette lighter. You should also do a visual inspection for corrosion now or ice build up on the battery posts when it’s cold. To be safe, always carry a set of jumper cables and know the basics of using them. Normally we don’t recommend added warranties, but if you live in a very cold or very warm climate battery warranties make sense.

(MORE)

CarMD Winter Safety Tips – 2-2-2

- **Tires and Brakes** – Tires lose pressure when temperatures drop. Be sure to check your tire pressure and tread depth, and consider whether you need all-weather tires in your area. You should also check your brakes for wear and tear and have them looked at if they are showing any of the following symptoms: squealing sounds, brake pedal judder, a pull to one side when braking or the feeling that your foot sinks to the floor when applying the brakes. If your vehicle has an anti-lock braking system (ABS), be sure it's working properly and you know how to use it. ABS is designed to reduce skidding and help you maintain control in an emergency as long as you apply them hard, and stay on them and do not pump the brakes. CarMD recently added coverage to access ABS diagnostic trouble codes and diagnose related problems on newer model vehicles. Also, make sure you double your normal safe stopping distance, take your time and drive more cautiously in winter months.
- **Wipers and Lights** – Changing your wiper blades is one of the best things you can do to help ensure your safety, and it's easy to do. The right time to change the wiper blades is not during a downpour or a snowstorm when you cannot see three feet in front of you. A set of wiper blades only costs about \$20 and can help drivers avoid an accident by seeing something a split second sooner. While you're at it, double check that all of your lights are working, including your fog, brake and emergency lights, and turn signals.
- **Cold Weather Car Kit** – Carrying a basic emergency kit year-round that includes a flashlight with extra batteries, water, flares, duct tape, extra windshield wiper fluid, tire jack and first-aid kit is important, particularly during winter months. CarMD recommends adding several items to the kit during the winter. First and foremost, be sure you have an ice scraper, which is much better than having to scrape ice off your window with a credit card and far more economical than using all windshield wiper fluid to defrost the window. Also, make sure you completely remove the snow from your car. Snow piled up on the hood will blow onto your windshield and refreeze almost instantly. Headlights and taillights need to be cleared as well so other vehicles can see you. Your winter kit should also include blankets, extra waterproof clothes, sand or kitty litter for tire traction, a shovel and gloves.

The award-winning CarMD® Vehicle Health System works on all 1996 and newer cars, trucks, minivans and SUVs to help drivers diagnose their car's health. It includes a handheld device that plugs into your car's computer to help you catch problems early. It also includes software for Mac and PC systems to generate diagnostic reports to explain what's wrong with your vehicle and what it will take to fix it. Some new safety-related additions to the product include the ability to pull anti-lock brake (ABS) and safety restraint system (SRS) codes on newer model vehicles, and see important safety recalls for your vehicles.

About CarMD.com Corp.

The mission of Fountain Valley, Calif.-based CarMD.com Corp., is to empower consumers and the vehicle market by providing the tools and information needed to make better-educated decisions about their vehicles' health and maintenance. Distributed by CarMD.com Corp., CarMD is priced at \$98.99 and is available in the U.S. direct to consumers at www.CarMD.com. The product is supported Monday – Saturday from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. (Pacific Time) by live Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) certified technicians based in the U.S.A. For more information or to order, visit www.CarMD.com.

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