

January's cold weather shouldn't stop your vehicle's maintenance needs

Bill Wilson and his crew at Crown Point Auto Repair know about cars and think you should, too. They need regular maintenance. Little problems can quickly turn into big problems when they are ignored, and a vehicle's life expectancy is greatly increased when it's treated with a little care.

Is your battery juiced?

Winter puts more stress on your battery, particularly if you park your car outdoors. Avoid the sinking feeling of hearing nothing when you hit the ignition with a proactive check of your battery and charging system now. Repair shops don't usually charge very much to load-test your battery, and some car-parts stores will do it for free.

If you find out your battery's going south, you can replace it at your convenience, instead of being at the mercy of whomever your dead car's been towed to.

Antifreeze

If you've missed a service interval or have another reason to doubt your coolant, go ahead and have it 'flushed and filled'. Just make sure your mechanic uses a compatible coolant to refill your car. Some coolants, such as Prestone's Extended Life, work for any car.

Check your tire pressure

Here are two good reasons to get down there with the gauge and unscrew the valve caps as the weather cools:

- 1) Tires lose a pound of pressure for every drop of 10 degrees Fahrenheit.
- 2) An underinflated tire won't "bite" through snow down to the pavement as well as one at pressure. It's similar to hydroplaning on water and just as dangerous.

You may have heard the guidance to let air out of your tires for sand or snow to get more contact surface area. That only applies only if the surface is bottomlessly soft, like a beach or foot-deep, unplowed snow; not the mix of cleared road, ice and packed snow most of us encounter in daily driving.

Don't forget to put the valve caps back on when you're done. Letting in moisture, which then freezes, could let the valve core leak out air.

If you're interested in learning more about proper vehicle maintenance, contact Bill Wilson, master mechanic and owner of Crown Point Auto Repair, or one his crew at 219-663-1847.