

Tune-ups and a garden hose might get Betsy through winter

Winter can mean trouble for your car. But with the help of a simple tune-up, some common sense and a garden hose, your car should make it through the winter with few problems.

That, at least, is the contention of the Automotive Information Council (AIC), a Southfield-based non-profit organization that provides consumer information regarding cars and auto safety.

With winter at its worse, chances are your car will be parked over night in sub-zero, snowy weather.

In the morning, you'll slip behind the wheel, snap on the seat belt and turn the key. It probably will start—just as it did a few months ago when it was in the parking lot all day in egg-frying temperatures.

Surprising? Not at all, AIC says, if your car receives the care it deserves. Of course, that isn't always the case. Many cars receive much less care than is deserved.

Recommended service intervals too often are ignored by motorists, the same people who never think of letting a week go by without vacuuming all the carpeting in the house.

"The automobile is truly an amazing machine," says the AIC. "Not only is it expected to function under such a wide range of weather conditions, but it is subject to road salt, chuckholes, careless and hard driving and indifferent maintenance."

"I CAN'T think of another product that has to do so much under so many adverse conditions," said Ronald H. Weiner, president of the AIC.

The early automobiles were toys for the rich and, as such, were used only for special occasions and therefore were able to be coddled. Routine maintenance had to be performed after each run.

Today, however, the automobile is an integral part of our way of life—to work, to the store, the scout meetings, baseball practice. Start and stop, start and stop, with all those functions taken for granted.

"We have come to rely on the proper functioning of an automobile to the point where we never make a time allowance in the case the car should fail to go," said the AIC executive. "We just expect it to start up and move out. Fortunately, that's what happens almost every time. But the isolated instance causes the owner to forget the many hundreds or thou-

sands of times the car started without a problem. And chances are that any problem resulted from neglect."

A simple tune-up, adding water to the battery, cleaning the battery terminals, a lubrication, using a carburetor cleaner: all these minor items can go a long way in keeping a reliable product even more reliable, the AIC said.

THE OUTSIDE of the car needs attention, too. That's where the garden hose comes in.

Keeping a garden hose handy for your car in the winter may sound like a silly idea, especially if you go to a carwash in the last winter months. But if you use the hose a few times on nice days during the winter for the underside of the car, it will pay big dividends when spring arrives, the AIC says.

Spraying under the fenders and other areas which even car washes don't reach will help remove road salt, dirt and other build-ups which help breed rust. Adjust the nozzle to a high-force spray. An old brush will help break up residue, permitting it to be washed away more easily.

It's a somewhat messy job, but it will be worth it in the long run because the car's rust often starts in those hidden areas, the AIC says. At the same time, wash grime off the door sills and, more importantly, the under portions of the doors, plus the tailgate if you have a station wagon. Applying a coat of wax to those areas at least once before and once during winter will help fend off rust.

When applying wax the underside of the doors, you will note small drain holes. These holes often are plugged with undercoating, in addition to dirt. Make sure the holes are cleaned out to prevent water buildup inside the doors. A small screwdriver or penknife will do the job.

Water from the high-pressure sprays in carwashes sometimes can get into the housings of parking and tail lights, so take a close look, and if they contain water merely loosen the retaining screws and the water should run out.

Finally, advises the AIC, drain the garden hose outside before putting it away. That will prevent water from running onto the floor. It also will keep the hose from freezing up and become an unmanageable, unusable object the next time you want to use it.

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