

Experts say that the time to winterize your car is now

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WATERBURY - As temperatures continue to drop, we're inching closer to winter and car experts say now is the time to get your car ready for the winter season.

Have you ever started off on a cold winter New England morning only to face an engine that won't turn over? If you don't want to find yourself in that situation, then start preparing now!

Wendel Soucy from the Porter and Chester Automotive Program in Waterbury offers these driving tips:

- 1) Check your freeze protection. Antifreeze protects your engine from dipping temperatures and guards against corrosion while lubricating key engine components and enabling heat in the passenger compartment. Most manufacturers recommend flushing the cooling system every two years, but always refer to the manufacturer's specifications and recommendations found in your owner's manual.
- 2) Inspect your battery. If your battery is already weak, the winter weather can make it worse! According to Porter and Chester Institute graduate and automotive technician James Garvey, you should inspect the connections on your battery for contact and corrosion and be certain it is secured properly in its housing. He also recommends battery testing be done by a professional. A free battery health check can be performed at many garages or auto parts stores.
- 3) Consider snow tires. Many of today's vehicles come with all-season tires, but New England weather can challenge the best of them. Have your tires checked for winter; many automotive technicians recommend a changeover to snow tires for driving in winter weather. According to a Consumer Reports test, snow tires are 40 percent better when it comes to snow traction and 15 percent better in braking on ice.
- 4) Two additional tips about tires--they're that important! Whether you use snow tires or not, you need to be extra attentive of your tires' tread depth and air pressure in the winter. Worn tires will have less traction, especially against slick winter roads. The air molecules in your tires react to the cold temps by taking up less space, decreasing the pressure. Check your tire pressure frequently during winter months to remain at the manufacturer's recommended pressure. Manufacturer recommended tire pressures can be found on the tire placard typically located on the driver's door jamb.
- 5) Have your brakes inspected. Porter and Chester Institute graduate and automotive technician Jeremy Belanger notes the importance of regular brake inspection and says that the only real way to determine the condition of your brakes is to remove your wheels for an inspection. He says that front and rear brake pads wear differently and need to be routinely checked and serviced by a professional automotive technician to be sure that your car's brakes work at optimum performance.
- 6) Inspect your car's external lights including headlights, taillights, turn signals, parking lights, brake lights, running lights, marker lights and fog lights. It gets dark early in the winter and your headlights don't just help you see better, they help other cars see you! In Connecticut and Massachusetts you're required to turn on your headlights from 30 minutes after sunset until 30 minutes before sunrise and when poor weather conditions reduce visibility. According to Porter and Chester Institute graduate and automotive technician James Garvey, visibility is especially important in winter weather.

7) Check your defrosters, wipers and windshield fluid. Make certain your defrosters are functioning properly, your wipers are in good shape and that your windshield wiper fluid is full. Since you're probably going to be using your wiper fluid much more on New England's messy winter roads, it's a good idea to keep an extra gallon of the fluid secured in your trunk.

8) Pack an emergency kit. One of the most important actions you can take for winter car care is to be prepared! Porter and Chester Institute automotive expert and instructor Henry Johnson highly recommends having an emergency kit in your car at all times. Among the items you'll need to have are jumper cables, a flashlight, gloves, a blanket and a multi-function tool.

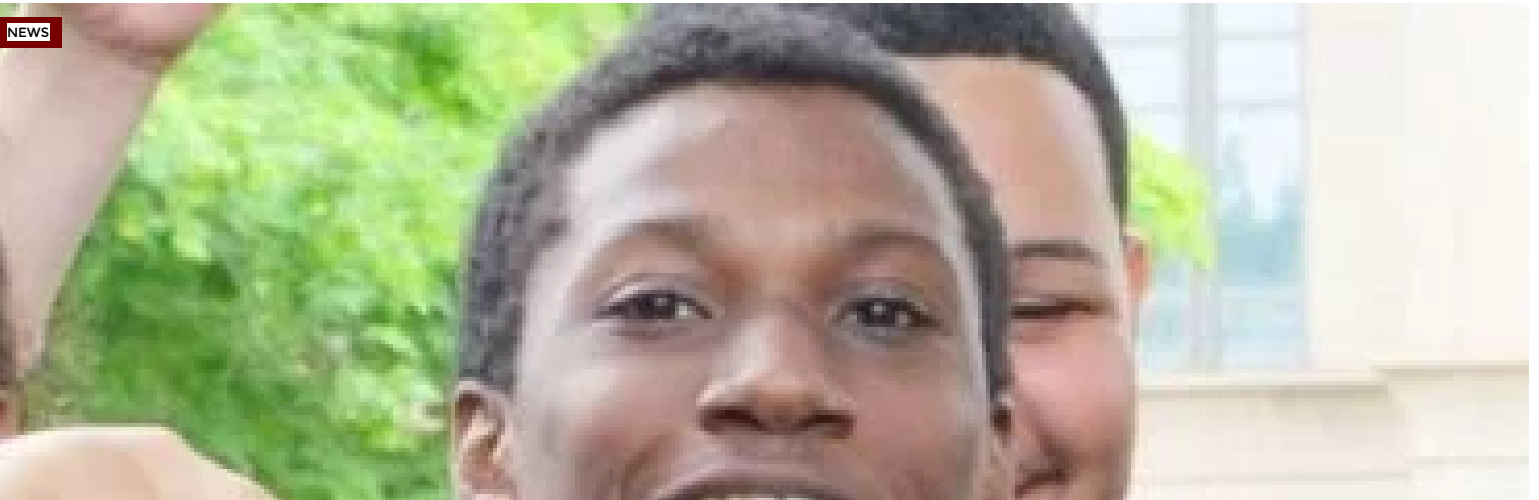
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