

Car care critical for winter driving safety

Instrument Panel Review

Every time you start your car they glow to greet you, but usually, after a few seconds of engine operation, they fade away—hopefully not to be seen again until the next engine start.

“Motorists need to be aware of the critical ‘big three’ warning lights, which include those that monitor engine oil pressure, engine coolant temperature, and vehicle charging system,” says Tom Strandberg, ODOT Public Affairs. “To reduce the chances of vehicle damage or a roadside breakdown, these warning lights require prompt and proper action when they illuminate.”

When the ignition key is first turned to the ON position, all of the vehicle’s warning lights should

illuminate. The “big three” lights typically remain on until the engine is started and running. If a warning light fails to illuminate at this time, have the related system checked out by an auto repair facility.

Once the engine is running, all the warning lights should go out within a few seconds. If any light remains illuminated, consult your owner’s manual.

The most common vehicle deficiencies include weak batteries, worn or damaged wiper blades, clogged air filters, low washer fluid, dirty or low motor oil, and low anti-freeze levels.

“Breakdowns are most often preventable by simply ensuring that



your vehicle is regularly maintained,” Strandberg said. “The state of health and durability of things like batteries, fluid levels, and tire conditions all come into question especially during the winter season when extremely cold temperatures can put even the most reliable devices to the test.”

The Winter Car Care 12-point inspection includes:

- Battery check for loose cables and corroded terminals
- Anti-freeze check for strength in the radiator overflow reservoir

- Oil level check with the vehicle’s dipstick
- Brake fluid level check
- Power steering fluid level check
- Automatic transmission fluid level check
- Inspection of all belts and hoses
- Inspection of the air filter
- Windshield washer fluid level check
- Inspection of windshield wipers
- Light and turn signal inspection
- Inspection of tire tread wear and inflation if necessary



Wintertime check list

Use this handy checklist to make sure you’re prepared every time you take a trip in Oregon’s winter wonderland.

- Tools: jack, lug wrench, shovel**
- Chains or traction tires**
- Flares**
- Extra warm clothes, boots, hat, gloves**
- Ice scraper and snow brush**
- Cell phone and car adaptor**
- Rechargeable flashlight**
- Extra food and water**
- First aid kit**
- Matches or lighter**
- Battery jumper cables**
- Extra food and water**
- Blanket/sleeping bag(s)**
- Paper towels**
- Pocket knife**
- Extra washer fluid**
- Highway Map**



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