

WINTER IS COMING

READY OR NOT.

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Canadian winters can put any vehicle to the test. Make sure your Toyota is ready for winter's worst before the snow flies.

While you're thinking about preparing your family for cold weather, don't forget to consider your vehicle's needs. A pre-winter inspection at your Toyota dealership can help ensure all components that are vital to your safety in colder weather are good to go for the chilly months ahead.

club Toyota talked with some Toyota Service Advisors for some handy tips on what you need to consider when a chill hits the air.

1 BATTERY

As the heart of the electrical system, your battery needs to be ready to produce enough power to start your engine. Part of your battery check will be an AVR (amps, voltage and resistance) test to ensure the electrical components are in good working order and that the alternator is putting out enough amperage to charge the battery.

"If the battery hasn't been serviced in a while and has had a long life, there might be fuzzy stuff growing on the terminals that needs to be cleaned off to ensure a strong connection," said Gary Colibaba, a Toyota service manager in Regina, Sask. The average lifespan of a battery is approx. 4-5 years.

BELTS, FLUIDS, GASKETS AND HOSES

A pre-winter inspection will involve all the moving parts, including:

Belts: Checking for cracks and deterioration;

Hoses: Ensuring they're not soft and floppy, which means they're breaking down internally and could lead to fluid leaks;

Gaskets: Checking the gaskets in the engine for weeping — if that's happening in warm weather, it could lead to a leak in cold weather; and

Fluids: Being sure that engine oil, coolants and brake fluids are topped up and flowing the way they should.



BRAKE COMPONENTS

In addition to replacing brake fluid, your vehicle's brake components could use a healthy dusting off as well. Calipers that aren't cleared of debris annually may start to stick and cause premature wear. Your parking brake should also get a once-over to ensure it's clear of moisture and in proper working order.

COLD BUSTERS

Battery blanket: Colibaba said his most winter-hardened customers prepare for those -40 degree Celsius days by having their dealers wrap their vehicle battery in a special blanket.

Block heater: For unbearably cold winters, plug your car into an external block heater so your battery is ready to go when you are.

2 WINTER TIRES

Arguably the most important pre-winter vehicle preparation you can do is switch over from all-season to winter tires. Colibaba said the magic number is 7 degrees Celsius—the ideal temperature to make the change. Winter tires use a specialized rubber compound designed for colder temperatures. At 7 degrees Celsius, all-season tire rubber tends to harden.

A more supple tire will provide up to 50 per cent more traction, according to the Saskatchewan Safety Council. Plus, winter tire tread patterns are designed to help expel water, snow and ice away from the tire tread.

Many Toyota dealers are making it easier for drivers to make the switch by offering a tire storage service.

Toyota also offers a Price Match Promise on winter tires from Sept. 1 - Nov. 30. See dealer for details.

WINDSHIELD WASHER FLUID

Enhance your driving experience with Premium All-Season Toyota Touch windshield washer fluid. It's non-staining and streak free, and has excellent cleaning power to help get rid of bugs and grime. It also prevents freezing of washer systems to -40°C.

3 WIPER BLADES

No pre-winter inspection is complete without snapping on a set of Toyota Genuine winter wiper blades. Toyota Senior Service Advisor Don Kyle, from Burnaby, B.C., said, "Even if you don't get a lot of rain in your region, we strongly recommend replacing your wiper blades once a year. Heat and other elements are very hard on them and the rubber could start to break down."