

As Temperatures Drop, AAA Urges Motorists to Prepare for New Season of Driving

AAA Kansas came to the rescue of nearly 25,000 motorists during winter 2021.

WICHITA, Kan. – Nov. 10, 2022 – With sub-freezing temperatures on the way to Kansas, AAA reminds motorists that cars need periodic checkups to maintain safety and maximize fuel efficiency. The fall and winter seasons can also bring issues forcing drivers to the roadside; AAA Kansas performed nearly 25,000 emergency roadside service rescues last winter alone. KSAAA recommends getting ahead of the change of season to make sure drivers avoid more expensive problems later on in the winter.

AAA urges motorists to use a simple checklist to determine their vehicle's fall and winter maintenance needs. Many of the items on the list can be inspected by a car owner in less than an hour, but others should be performed by a certified technician.

"Having your vehicle serviced by professionals who are trained to identify potential problems will help prevent breakdowns and often saves money on repairs over the long term," said Shawn Steward, AAA Kansas spokesman. "Basic maintenance not only adds to the longevity of your vehicle, but also improves safety and can increase fuel mileage."

Motorists can identify reliable, high-quality repair shops with certified technicians by looking for an AAA Approved Auto Repair sign at their local repair shop. These facilities must meet and maintain high professional standards for customer service, technician training, tools, equipment, warranties and cleanliness. Nearby shops can be located at [AAA.com/repair](https://www.aaa.com/repair).

Harsh winter conditions make your vehicle work harder, particularly the charging and starting system, headlights, tires and windshield wipers. AAA recommends that motorists focus on the following:

- **Battery:** Clean any corrosion from battery posts and cable connections and wash all surfaces with battery terminal cleaner or a solution of baking soda and water. Even at 32 degrees, a battery is 35 percent weaker. At zero degrees, a car's battery loses about 60 percent of its strength, yet the engine needs about twice as much power to start. If your battery is 3 years or older, have the battery checked by a professional to ensure it is strong enough to face cold weather. AAA members can request a visit from a [AAA Mobile Battery Service](#) technician who will test their battery and replace it on-site, if necessary.
- **Tires:** Examine tires for tread depth, uneven wearing and cupping. Check tire pressures once a month when tires are cold, before driving for any distance.
- **Engine:** Have any engine drivability problems corrected at a good repair shop. Symptoms like hard starts, rough idling, stalling or diminished power could signal a problem that would be exacerbated by cold weather. Engine hoses and belts should be inspected for wear or cracking.
- **Fluids:** Important system fluids such as engine coolant/anti-freeze, transmission and brake fluid should be checked and changed at recommended intervals.
- **Exhaust:** Have your mechanic check the exhaust system for leaks and look for any holes in the trunk and floorboards.
- **Brakes:** Inspect brakes as recommended in your owner's manual, or sooner if you notice pulsations, pulling, noises while braking or longer stopping distance. Correct minor brake problems promptly.

- **Wipers:** Replace worn windshield-wiper blades. Purchase one-piece beam-type or rubber-clad “winter” blades to fight snow and ice build-up. Use cold-weather windshield washer solvent and carry an ice-scraper.
- **Lights:** Inspect all lights and bulbs and replace burned out bulbs. Clean road grime or clouding from all lenses.

Pack a Vehicle Emergency Kit

Motorists are advised to prepare a winter emergency kit now and stow in the cargo area of their vehicle to have it immediately available should the need arise. AAA warns, more than 40 percent of motorists do not carry an emergency kit in their vehicle.

The emergency kit should include:

- Fully charged mobile phone pre-programmed with rescue apps and important phone numbers including family and emergency services, and car charger
- Bottled water
- First-aid kit
- Non-perishable snacks for both human and pet passengers
- Bag of abrasive material (sand, salt, cat litter) or traction mats
- Snow shovel
- Blankets
- Extra warm clothing (coat, gloves, hats, scarves)
- Flashlight with extra batteries
- Window washer solvent
- Ice scraper with brush
- Cloth or roll of paper towels
- Jumper cables
- Warning devices (flares or triangles)
- Basic toolkit (screwdrivers, pliers, adjustable wrench)

Many of the winter emergency items listed above – plus pre-assembled multi-item kits – are available, at a discount to AAA members in the [online store](#) at AAA.com. Some emergency kits may also be available at local AAA retail locations.

Sharpen winter driving skills

AAA's Steward adds that in addition to ensuring their vehicles are road ready, motorists should prepare for changing roadway conditions and be mindful of their driving behaviors. "Here in South Dakota, we know that weather can change drastically from day to day--and even hour to hour--especially this time of year," she says. "Winter roadways bring new challenges, so it's doubly important that motorists be mindful of their driving behaviors and ensure they are putting their safest driving habits into place at all times."

According to research by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, winter storms, bad weather and sloppy road conditions are a factor in nearly half a million crashes and more than 2,000 road deaths every winter in the United States.

AAA offers the following winter driving tips:

- **Turn off cruise control:** Avoid using cruise control when driving in wet or icy conditions.
- **Buckle up:** Each and every passenger (including pets) should be properly restrained.
- **Put down the phone:** Eliminate all distractions while driving including phones and other electronic devices.
- **Move Over:** Remember to slow down and move over when first responders, road construction workers, waste collection workers, emergency roadside assistance workers, utility workers, stranded motorists and others are at the roadside.

- **See and be seen:** Remove snow/ice from the hood, roof, truck, lights, windows and mirrors.
- **Slow down and give yourself more room:** Increase following distance to at least 10 seconds.
- **Stay in your lane:** Avoid changing lanes, especially if snow and ice are built up between lanes
- **Accelerate gently:** If tires lose grip and start to spin, let off on the accelerator.
- **Pay close attention on hills:** When approaching a hill observe how other drivers are responding and keep far enough behind the vehicle ahead of you so that you will not have to slow down or stop. Once you reach the crest of the hill, reduce your speed and proceed as slowly as possible.
- **Avoid slamming on the brakes:** A skid can occur when you apply the brakes so hard that one or more wheels lock. Should a skid occur try to remain calm and steer in the direction you want the vehicle to go.

Android and iPhone users can download AAA Mobile, AAA's mobile smartphone app that provides AAA services, including not only roadside service and member discounts for members, but mapping and gas price comparisons for all motorists. AAA Membership is not required to download and use AAA apps, but is necessary to take advantage of unique member benefits such as roadside assistance. For more information on AAA Mobile, visit <https://cluballiance.aaa.com/mobile-services>.