



## Is Your Vehicle Ready for Old Man Winter?

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When weather and road conditions deteriorate owing to snow and ice, having a vehicle that is properly winterized becomes critically important to its operation. Driving in snow and ice is made difficult by low traction, long stopping distances, and low visibility. While it is always best to plan around the worst weather, traveling in slippery conditions is often not avoidable, especially during long North Country winters. When faced with poor road conditions, will your vehicle be ready?

Fall is the time to start thinking about how your vehicle will perform during the upcoming winter. Preparing your vehicle in advance will make your driving experience as safe and stress-free as possible. Below, are a few key items to check. Note: if you have a teen driver at home, take the opportunity to educate them on the need to keep their vehicle in proper shape for winter conditions, and on the idea of driving appropriately and safely to the road conditions.

### ✓ Tires

Tires should be your #1 investment when dealing with winter travel conditions. A good set of winter tires will provide the best possible grip in snowy, slushy, and icy conditions, due to their deeper tread pattern. Winter tires are also made from compounds that work well at colder temperatures. Whether you have all-season or winter tires, make sure you have proper inflation pressure and ample tread remaining on your tires to ensure good traction and stopping capability. The placard showing the vehicle manufacturer's recommended tire pressure can be found on the driver's side doorjamb, or rear edge of the driver's door. Your car care professional or tire dealer can advise on the status of your current tires, and/or recommend winter tires ideal for your make and model vehicle.

**Did You Know?** Studded winter tires provide an extra measure of traction (mainly on ice).

However, state laws limit their use to certain times of year to help preserve asphalt surfaces. Here are the northern New England and New York studded snow tire regulations as of fall 2017. Consult state Department of Transportation officials if you have any questions about legality in your area.

State	Permission	Contact Information
Maine	Permitted: October 1 – April 30	207-626-3800 (Department of Public Safety)
New Hampshire	Permitted: No Restrictions	603-271-3734
New York	Permitted: October 16 – April 30	518-897-2000 (State Police)
Vermont	Permitted: No Restrictions	802-244-7345 (Highway Patrol)

## ✓ Brakes

As should be part of routine maintenance, have your car care professional ensure your brakes and braking system are in good working condition. Stopping distances are much longer when road surfaces are slippery, and poor brakes can make the situation worse. All-wheel drive vehicles may handle best in the snow - but no matter the drivetrain of your vehicle - you are reliant on your brakes (and tires) to slow down and stop effectively.

## ✓ Wipers / Wiper Fluid

Outward visibility is critically important when driving in snow. Do you **wiper blades** work well? Examine each wiper blade to ensure they aren't splitting or peeling. Do the blades adhere uniformly to the windshield? If not, have them replaced. The buildup of snow and slush will exacerbate issues of poor visibility when the wiper blade is not making consistent contact across your windshield.

Do you have enough **washer fluid**? Make sure that you do, and that it is rated for below freezing temperatures (preferably -20°F or lower due to possible frigid temperatures). You'll likely need a lot of washer fluid during a snowstorm because of the accumulation of snow and slush and increased spray from the roadways and other vehicles. A good **ice scraper and snow brush** is also a requisite to have in your vehicle, even if it is just to scrape the windshield on a clear, frosty morning.

## ✓ Battery

Have your vehicle's battery checked by your car care professional or your favorite auto parts store. Electrical current provided by the battery is reduced at colder temperatures, so a failing battery may not make itself known until the winter months. Few things are more frustrating than a vehicle that won't start in the cold. If you need to purchase a new battery, many auto parts stores are able to install it for you at little or no added charge.

Another device that can come in handy is a **portable battery jump starter**. These portable devices can provide starting power in a manner similar to traditional "jump starting", but without the need of hooking up a dead battery to someone else's car or truck. Again, see your favorite auto parts supplier for details.

## ✓ Winter Survival Kit

A winter survival kit is also a good idea, in the event you become stranded in a storm. Survival items can be kept in your trunk or storage area, to have on hand when you need them. This might include a blanket, some non-perishable food, a small or collapsible snow shovel, and a portable battery jump starter. If you are stranded in a snowstorm, stay with your vehicle but make yourself visible by using hazard lights or interior dome lights. To prevent carbon monoxide poisoning, ensure the exhaust pipe stays clear of snow and crack your window slightly for fresh air. Run your vehicle for short periods of time only as needed to provide heat and conserve fuel. A car adaptor for your cell phone is also a good idea, so that you can ensure adequate charging for the device in case you are stuck and need to call for help.

## Weather Forecasts and Road Conditions

**Plan around Winter Weather when possible.** The National Weather Service provides local forecasts out through 7 days, including watches, warnings, and advisories for wintry precipitation and other winter hazards (e.g., low wind chill values). You can learn more about NWS winter weather forecast products and preparedness at the following link: <https://www.weather.gov/safety/winter-before>. Also, visit NWS Burlington's local winter weather page here to keep track of winter weather forecasts and hazards across Vermont and northern New York: <https://www.weather.gov/btv/winter>.

Building flexibility into your travel plans in the wintertime is a good idea. Traveling when roads are mostly free of snow and ice will make your trip less stressful, and you won't be slowed by poor travel conditions. Regardless, properly winterizing your vehicle will provide an extra measure of safety and peace of mind in the event you are traveling in less than ideal winter conditions to work, home, or your favorite winter activity.

### Helpful links for forecasts and road conditions

NWS Forecasts are available 24/7 at: <https://weather.gov/btv>, via [NOAA Weather Radio](#), and by forecast hotline at (802) 862-2475.

Road Conditions for northern New England: <http://newengland511.org>

Road Conditions for New York: <http://www.511ny.org/>