



Prepare Your Vehicle for Winter

Winter storms can lead to increased accidents and to hours or days stranded in your car. Don't be caught wishing you had taken the time to get those vehicles ready.

Take your car to the shop for routine maintenance. Check the oil, antifreeze, windshield washing fluid, wiper blades, hoses and belts. Repair or replace anything that needs attention.

Check tires to be sure they have good tread and will get you safely through the winter. If you live in a storm prone area change to snow tires or others appropriate to the conditions where you live.

Take inventory and clear out the "junk in the trunk", so you can add the items that will save your life – the things you need in your Winter Auto Kit.

- Water is the most important item in your auto kit. You can survive days and even weeks without food but only a few days without water. Without water you may be tempted to eat snow. NEVER do that. Water stored in your car will be clean and safe when other sources may not be. If your water should freeze, it can be thawed. Water in mylar pouches can be heated near a fire or in the engine compartment while you run your engine. Running an engine for 10 minutes every hour will help prevent frostbite and will be adequate to help charge a cell phone, assuming you have a charger.
- Food is the second most important item to include in all auto kits. During a winter emergency your body will retain body heat and create more warmth as it digests food.
- Glow sticks will provide light during the nighttime hours and make you more visible to rescuers. I love the 10-inch glow sticks, these are great to use in place of flares, to mark a path, to direct traffic after an accident, or during an emergency to signal rescuers at night. They can be seen for a mile.
- Work gloves are needed if you change a tire, put on chains, or dig your wheels out of the mud or snow. Work gloves can also be used to keep your hands warm if someone is traveling without gloves.
- Snow chains, and/or sand or kitty litter will help with traction if your car spins out in the snow.
- Bungee Cords have a million uses for building shelter and securing your car.
- A small camp shovel is great to build a snow cave or dig your car out of a snowbank.
- Waterproof matches or lighter. Priceless.
- A metal container to melt snow. A number 10 can works well for this and is a handy way to store small items.
- A mirror or extra mylar blanket to be used to signal rescuers.
- Umbrella: Instant shelter and protection from the wind. Umbrellas make a good door for a shelter as well.

Totally Ready

Prepped when it really counts

- Safety vests to be worn so you can be more easily seen by rescuers or while walking near the roadway (bright orange vests, cheap ones). You will all be safer if you need to leave the car, and each passenger wears a vest. These can also be attached to your car as a distress signal.
- Cell phone charger for the car.
- Small candle: If placed on the dash, this will help keep the air in the car above freezing. Don't go to sleep and leave it lit. You can also run your car engine for 10 minutes every hour to warm the car and charge the phone. Make sure before running the engine that the tail pipe is not blocked. Also, leave a window slightly open on the downwind side of the car (facing away from the wind) for ventilation, but where the air is fresh and free of carbon monoxide from the auto exhaust (which is poisonous).
- Wool blanket: You should have one per seat in your car. If you have bench seats and also some club seating, each seat needs a blanket in a survival situation.
- Mylar emergency blankets have dozens of uses from creating warmth to blocking wind, to use as a signaling device.
- Tool kit: How sad to be stranded for lack of a screwdriver or wrench. A multi- function tool is also a good alternative.
- Knit cap and mittens: Much of your body heat is lost through your head, so a head covering is important. Mittens are warmer than gloves. Remember wool or man-made fibers are better in cold/wet weather than cotton.
- Body warmers - the instant heat type. Make sure when purchasing these that you buy warmers rated for 20 hours, not 20 minutes. These are small and easy to stash in your auto emergency kit.
- A whistle can be heard much further away than the human voice. I would have at least 2 in the car. If one member of your party needs to leave to look for help, you can signal each other every few minutes and help guide the other person back to the car so they don't become lost. It is not wise for anyone to leave alone and go further away than "whistle distance." It is just too easy to become disoriented and lost.
- A Flashlight with extra batteries and an extra bulb... Never store the batteries in the flashlight – even the fancy Alkaline batteries can leak or explode inside your flashlight, leaving you surprised to find your flashlight useless in an emergency.
- A portable radio is great to hear news and weather reports without draining your car battery. Make sure you have both AM and FM bands. Look for radios that are also a flashlight and siren.
- Tow rope or strap: Some people who could help pull you out of the ditch are not equipped with a rope. Think of how smart you will look, when you say, "I've got one!" We're not talking about a wimpy little rope, we mean a hefty tow strap or real sisal rope like a trucker might carry. Ropes are also important when creating a shelter if you can't remain in your car.

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- Maps: Do you pay attention to where you are when traveling? If you don't know where you are, how will you find where you want to go? Maps should include local, state, and destination maps when traveling. A travel club is really handy for these. Do not assume GPS will be working.
- Compass: A Scout would know what to do with it. Do you?
- Roll of TP: One of life's essentials, great to help start a fire as well as the usual uses.
- Fire extinguisher. What good is your emergency gear if it's burning up with the car? More than once, we've seen cars fully ablaze at the side of the highway. Gasoline + heat + leaking fuel line = fire.
- 12-foot Jumper Cables just in case help should arrive but unable to get bumper to bumper for a jump start.
- Two quarts of oil.
- Gallon of antifreeze. Antifreeze also burns well and is perfect to use when lighting a signal fire.
- Extra fuses and bulbs.
- Fix a flat. Bring along a can and avoid changing a flat.
- Rags can be soaked to start a fire, to clean up, or for blocking cracks in doors and windows keeping out cold winds.
- Roll of duct tape: What did the world do before duct tape?
- Ice scraper to keep windows clear so you can see rescuers as well as dangers approaching.
- Wool socks. Keeping dry is very, very important to survival when stranded during the winter. Change socks that become wet and dry the wet ones near a fire or in the engine compartment.
- Sweatshirt or coat. When your core gets cold your body will draw heat from your limbs to protect your vital organs. This leads to frostbite.
- Sunglasses. Snow blindness is a real problem when traveling in the snow.
- Completed Emergency Cards with medical and contact information. When stranded for a few days you may be too tired to remember this information when help arrives.
- Small notebook and pencil to leave notes should you have to leave your car. **DO NOT LEAVE** unless you are in real danger.
- A tarp is great to have on hand to lay over the snow when putting on chains or changing a tire. They are also great to build a shelter.
- Items for children as well as adults: Stress relievers such as a book, travel games, crossword puzzles and scriptures are easy to include and important as a distract so you aren't constantly thinking about your situation.