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## Winter Driving: Preparing Your Vehicle

**W**inter in Colorado often brings icy conditions, snow, and slick roads. While it is always best to stay home when road conditions are poor, winter driving is necessary for many Coloradans. Ensuring that your vehicle is properly prepared for winter before poor road conditions set in can help prevent accidents. AAA recommends that drivers have their vehicles checked in the Fall as icy, wet, and cold weather can challenge a vehicle's operating efficiency.

### Electrical System

The electrical system consists of the battery, ignition, and lights. A fully-charged battery is needed for cold-weather starts, so the charge should be checked, and the battery replaced if needed. Also, check for damaged wires, a cracked distributor cap, or worn spark plugs in the ignition system because they can cause a breakdown or prevent the vehicle from starting. Check that headlights are clean and in working order. Dirt and grime can cut down the lenses' effectiveness by as much as 90%.

### Brake System

Brakes are critical in any driving condition and should be checked regularly. Brake repairs should not be delayed.

### Tires

Traction between the tire and the road surface determines how well a vehicle stops, turns, and accelerates. Tires should be properly inflated and in good condition. For drivers who live in areas of light-to-moderate snowfall, a set of all-season tires (M+S rated) should suffice. Snow tires or chains may be necessary for Coloradans living at higher altitudes.

### The Exhaust System

The exhaust system muffles engine noise and disperses dangerous gases like carbon monoxide given off by the engine. A mechanic should check the system for leaks to help prevent carbon monoxide poisoning. Remember, carbon monoxide is odorless, difficult to detect, and deadly if inhaled in large quantities. If your vehicle is stuck in snow and you have the engine running, be sure that the exhaust pipe is not blocked and leave a window slightly open to prevent carbon monoxide from building up in the passenger compartment.

### Heating and Cooling System

Check that your vehicle has enough antifreeze to prevent freezing in winter conditions. Antifreeze should be changed, and the system checked for leaks as recommended by your vehicle owner's manual.

### Windshields and Vehicle Exterior

Keep windshields and mirrors clean. Replace worn wiper blades that leave streaks and decrease visibility. Also, use an antifreeze windshield wiper fluid. Check that wiper blades are free of ice and snow before using to prevent damage to the window and wiper motor.

### What This Means for Counties

County employees will likely face snowy or icy road conditions this winter, either in their personal or county vehicles. Being prepared for these conditions lessens the likelihood of an accident or breakdown. For more information about winter driving conditions, contact CTSI at 303 861 0507. 