

GETTING READY FOR WINTER – PART II

By: Ralph Seekins

Part I of this article was published last week. If you didn't keep a copy from last Friday, you can find GETTING READY FOR WINTER – PART I on the Seekins Ford-Lincoln-Mercury website www.seekins.com. Just click on the COLUMN ARCHIVES link.

Next, I recommend you check your windshield wipers and wiper/washer anti-freeze. Make sure the rubber wiper parts and the spring-arms are in good shape. I recommend replacing the wipers and checking the adjustment of the arms at least once a year. After our long sunlight hours have gone away (sunlight is tough on rubber) Fall is a great time to make that once-a-year change. Then, pick up a gallon of good wiper/washer anti-freeze now. Top off the reservoir and keep the rest handy for further fill-ups. A little squirt dissolves morning windshield frost and can significantly reduce wiper blade wear.

Now is a good time to check and possibly change your vehicle's filters. Consider changing the air filter and fuel filter before winter sets in. Fuel filters are known to trap water – something you don't want in your fuel system. And, as all Alaskans know, winter is when water shows up more at the gas pump and is also when increased gas tank condensation produces the most water.

And, talking about water, now is the time to get a case of gas line anti-freeze for your gasoline powered vehicle or anti-gel and performance improver for your diesel powered vehicle. Adding a half bottle of gas line anti-freeze (i.e. HEET or Dri-Gas) every couple of fill-ups in winter will help keep frozen water from plugging up your vehicle's gas line. And about 4 ounces of diesel anti-gel for every 25 gallons of diesel fuel will help keep the fuel from gelling and plugging your fuel line in cold weather. I can't tell you how many towed in vehicles we see that only need a half-bottle of HEET or a jolt of anti-jell treatment to solve their no-start/no-run problem in the winter. It's expensive and embarrassing to get caught with such an easily avoided situation.

One other preventative service measure you should consider before winter is to check all your vehicle's various light bulbs. We now have less daylight than anyplace south of us until this time next March. You depend on good lighting more in winter for a much longer part of the day. And, remember, it's much easier to replace burned out or weak bulbs now than it will be at 20 below.

Now is also the time to check your vehicle's winter front or consider having one installed. Use a winter front as soon as the temperatures dip below zero. You will help your engine run better and last longer in our severe operating conditions and you and your passengers will stay warmer in cold weather operation.

Finally, it's time to schedule getting your winter tires installed. Many modern vehicles come equipped with all-weather tires that work reasonably well on snow and ice during cold weather. However, some folks want and need studded tires for a number of good reasons. Studded tires are legal everywhere in Alaska from October 1st through April 15th. So, if you use studded tires on your vehicle and you want to

avoid the “first snow” rush, get it done early. Remember, those first snows of the year are the most dangerous.

If you just aren't one of those handy folks who handle your vehicle services at home, I recommend that you take your vehicle to the dealer who represents your vehicle's manufacturer or, if none is available, to a reputable service shop. Getting it done now won't take long. Not getting it done can cost you a lot of money and maybe a prolonged wait when you are forced to get it done in the middle of winter. Good luck and safe motoring.