

Getting a Head Start in Extreme Weather

When winter is on the way, it means more than just cold weather for your battery. A dead battery in extreme cold can strand motorists. The best defense, and safety measure, is checking the battery and charging system to keep them sufficiently maintained during winter. Another factor is how well batteries are maintained during hot weather – summer heat can cause extensive damage to batteries. When the weather turns cold, a weakened battery can't deliver enough power to start a cold engine.

To illustrate, Battery Council International statistics indicate:

- When the outside temperature is 80°F, a fully-charged battery has 100 percent of its power available to start the car.
- When the temperature drops to 32°F, a fully-charged battery only has approximately two-thirds of its power available.
- At 0°F, that same fully-charged battery has only 40 percent of its power available to start the vehicle.

This clearly emphasizes the need for motorist to keep their battery fully charged.

Several tips for good auto and battery maintenance to prepare for cold weather:

- Keep the car engine in good condition by performing regular maintenance.
 - Tune up and change the oil regularly.
 - Watch for terminal corrosion on the battery and make sure all connections are clean and tight.
 - Ask your technician to test your battery. This type of test can be performed quickly by most automotive service centers.
- Ideally, park the car in a garage at night, providing some insulation against low temperatures, ice and snow.
- When you drive in cold weather, make certain you drive the car long enough to recharge the battery, and try to avoid frequent stops and starts over a short period of time.
- To efficiently recharge a battery while driving, motorists should minimize electrical loads, such as windshield and rear window defrosters, radio, extra lights and electric windows.
- If the car is difficult to start, have the vehicle's electrical system checked, and if any component is marginal, it's probably time to get a replacement component. This type of test can be performed quickly by most automotive service centers.