

Car and SUV Winterization

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Protecting your pride and joy and one of your largest investments this winter. The automobile has become an extension of its owners personality as well as representing a huge chunk of our hard earned income. Lets face it, as Americans we love our cars. We want them to look good, cruise smoothly and last a long time. Then of course there is the weather. Man is constantly adapting to his environment and adjusting to his climate. We put stuff on the roads so we can drive in any weather without fear of becoming the next human driven hockey puck.

During the Winter Months different agencies apply different things to the roads to keep them drivable like salt, sand and chemicals such as de-icing chemicals, which are environmentally friendly but can destroy a regular wax job. Magnesium Sulfate works great to keep cars from sliding into the guardrails and ditches, but it plays hell on an automobiles finish. With rust and corrosion threatening to destroy your investment and reduce the value of your car by thousands of dollars the stakes become high. We may not be able to control the weather quite yet, but we can give you the tips from years of experience and industry knowledge to help you minimize your risk, fight back against jack frost and work with mother nature to co-exist and cruise successfully through winter. How can you win the war on winter?

Winter is coming and will soon be in full swing. Roads will be packed with vacationers and outdoor sports aficionados. You and your car need to be ready. We know from experience that bare metal will rust when exposed to moisture and harsh elements. Take a look around your car, are there paint chips? Even small chips can allow moisture to get underneath your cars finish and work its way all the way through the metal. Holes in your car needless to say will not improve your chances for good resale value. And if your car is on a lease they will be hitting you hard on its return. There are several things you can do to take care of these chips now. To find a chip repair person go to www.paintbull.com and find one of their 500 mobile chip repair dealers. If you have a fiberglass body or a primarily plastic car such as a Saturn it may not be as critical if you have a chip or two.

Every car that drives through harsh winter climates needs some type of undercoating. There are many options. You can go down to your local auto parts store, buy a can of undercoating and spray it on yourself or you can go to any auto detailing company and have it done for about \$80-100. There are a few detailing companies who have a number of stores throughout the country as well as mobile units, which can provide this undercoating for you. You can also go www.ziebart.com, they have 216 stores Nationwide. They have been closing stores at a fast rate of about 30 per year. They charge about \$200-300 and will touch up the undercoating job free each year. They use this as a gimmick to get you in their store next year to sell you more stuff. Their guarantee is of questionable value since if the store closes then who will do the guarantee work. Another problem with the lifetime guarantee is that most people do not own their cars for their entire life

If you own a truck or a cargo van you may consider a lining. There are a few different types of linings. Rhino Lining at www.rhinolining.com has a rubber like lining. An average bed runs about \$300. There is Line X, which is a harder liner at www.line-x.com and Permatech at www.perma-tech.com which has a really good liner that is between the hard Line X liner and the softer a Rhino Lining. All these brands have hundreds of franchisees and dealers. You can conveniently search their websites to find a location near you. The going rate is around \$300 for an 8 ft bed and you can negotiate a little with your local dealer.

What can you do to protect your cars paint? Several things. It is important to understand the different types of wax and how they perform against salt spray tests. Carnauba the most popular wax name amongst consumers, will not hold up well under harsh salt conditions, de-icing wetted areas or on magnesium chloride soaked roads. It does however work well against roads, which have been covered, with sand. Teflon and silicone waxes do not work well in any of these conditions or in colder climates. So what is the best modern wax for these Winter environments? Polymers work best, but are usually put on in a liquid form and therefore goes on in thinner coats. It may take several coats to insure that the protection last longer than three months. It is best to put on several coats and then re-apply in three months. If you do not feel that you want to do this yourself you can call several companies that provide onsite service at home or office. National Detail Systems at www.nationaldetail.com has over 300 dealers. Ask for polymer wax and ask for a multiple coat discount. Expect to pay \$65-90 plus \$15-25 for each additional coat from National Detail Dealers. It will vary significantly from dealer to dealer. The Car Wash Guys have standard pricing and charge \$35 for an exterior polymer coat and charge \$10 for additional coats. Many car washes also have express detailing service starting at anywhere from \$35-55. To get a listing of car washes go to www.carclub.com the new J.D. Powers Car Club website. This site is quite helpful. The website will give you a map to the nearest carwash based on the zip code you put in. You can print it out and drive down and get your car waxed. Fixed site carwashes vary so much from operator to operator it is hard to say what additional coats might cost, it may even depend on the day of the week you go, which manager is working and how busy they are that day. You should try to go on a Tuesday.

You may wish to put a protective coating on your cars carpets. The very popular product ScotchGuard was taken off the market this year due to environmental problems in manufacturing and is no longer available. Blue Coral does make a similar aerosol product although not as good as the former 3M leading brand. With new genetic woven splicing of nylon into cotton plants we are seeing a new breed of interior carpeting in vehicles. It is more durable easier to clean and holds up well under multiple steam cleaning passes. Perhaps a simple plastic cover over the

carpets might be your best bet. Most modern day min-vans come standard with plastic covers and if yours did not, you can buy plastic covers for next to nothing at any auto parts store.

There are also some very high tech solutions to automotive protection. For window glass there is a hydrophobic treatment called Diamon Fusion. There is a company at www.windowwashguys.com, which can apply this for you. It prevents chips in the window and allows you to drive in heavy rain without use of wipers. A simple solution may be RainX, which can be purchased at any auto parts store for about \$5. All of the companies listed in this article can also put on RainX for you. Be sure to ask them to apply it to the interior windows also because it prevents unnecessary fogging when you do not have your defroster set exactly right. The coating industry has evolved and out of the NASA Space Program came a glass coating used on the tiles on the bottom of the Space Shuttle, which can be put on at room temperature. It is put on 2 to 4 millimeters thick. Glass of course is impervious to moisture. For more information go to www.adsil.com. This new revolution in ceramic technology is also being perfected by the Japanese. PP&G, the leading automotive paint company, is also on the cutting edge of this new field and we may soon have a new and more advanced clear coat for cars for the 21st century. That is the good news. We may see a new clear coat for cars coming out which will make waxes obsolete in the next few years. The bad news is that for now there is no substitute for waxes, coatings and undercoating. You can pay now or pay later. You really should consider protecting your investment. If you neglect to take this opportunity to plan your winterizing strategy, Mother Nature already has a plan of her own and she is coming soon.

Many people are only going to keep their car for two years on a lease and then trade it in for a new model. So if there are no chips in the paint, you may only need a single coat of polymer wax and new windshield wiper blades before Winter. If you are going to keep your car for many years however protect your investment against the inevitable Winter. Please realize that most manufacturers warranties on bodies and paint do not cover salt or environmental damage. If you pay attention to these simple things you can cruise through winter with no problems providing your tires dont get recalled and you can still afford the gas. Lance Winslow - Online Think Tank forum board. If you have innovative thoughts and unique perspectives, come think with Lance; www.WorldThinkTank.net/wttbbs/