

*Editor's Note: Safety Group Program Monthly Newsletter Article — Dec. 2021
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How To Winterize Your Car In 7 Simple Steps

It's been a mild start to December in Colorado, with [near-record-setting high temperatures](#). But longtime residents of the state know the weather can turn in just a few hours. Snow and ice will hit the roads before we know it, and you should get any vehicle you drive ready for those conditions now.

Our safety consultants offer their best tips for getting ready for winter, whether you are prepping a company vehicle or the one you use for your daily commute. Share these tips with your employees as well so they can winterize their own cars.

1. Test your systems

Turn the car on and make sure all systems work, including your battery, lights, turn signals, brakes and heater/defroster.

Test the wiper blades by squirting fluid on the windshield. Can you see clearly when you wipe it away? If not, replace the blades, because you need complete visibility when you drive in snow or sleet.

Check your antifreeze and windshield wiper fluid levels. Top them off if they look low.

2. Be prepared for emergencies

Create an emergency kit for your car in case you get stranded on the side of the road. It should include:

- Flare.
- Ice scraper.
- Tire chains.
- Tow rope.
- Jumper cables.
- Warm clothes and/or blanket.
- Small shovel.
- Flashlight.

You may also want to keep dried fruit or nuts and a bottle of water in the car for nourishment in case you get stuck.

3. Change or upgrade your tires

Install snow tires if you use them. If you have all-weather tires, measure the tread to see if you should replace them. Try the penny test:

- Turn a penny upside down, so that Lincoln's head points toward the tire.
- Lower the penny into the rib, the raised part of the tread that goes all the way around the tire.
- If you can still see Lincoln's whole head, and none of it is covered by the side of the rib, then you may need new tires because the tread has worn away.
- Repeat the test on all four tires, as wear may differ.

4. Improve traction on slippery roads

Carry a tub of salt or kitty litter in your trunk to spread when you need better traction on a slippery road.

5. Monitor the exhaust pipe

Stranded during a storm and can't move your car? Turn the vehicle on every hour for about 20 minutes to stay warm while conserving fuel, but do it safely. Snow or ice can clog your exhaust pipe and lead to carbon monoxide leaking into your vehicle. Get out periodically to remove snow that has built up around the exhaust pipe and clear any clogs in the pipe.

6. Get gas often

Yes, gas prices are high right now, but the price of a frozen gas line is even higher. Maintain at least a half-full gas tank to keep your gas line healthy. Also, avoid wasting gas by idling the car to warm it up. This can actually hurt your engine.

7. Review cold-weather driving tips

Finally, get ready to drive your winterized vehicle in messy conditions. [Basic safety practices](#) include:

- Increasing following distance behind other cars, giving you more time to react if a vehicle driving ahead stops suddenly.
- Driving slowly, including accelerating and decelerating slowly.
- Avoiding distracted driving, such as texting and driving.

Our [driving safety resources](#) include additional tips you can share. You can also [visit Pinnacol's blog](#) for more information on keeping your employees safe. Contact our safety consultants at safetyoncall@pinnacol.com to ask questions about driving safety.

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