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## **Don't Let Your Car Break Down on a Holiday: AAA Tips on What to Check Before You Go**

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As Southern New England braces for record cold temps this week, Thanksgiving Day travelers certainly won't want to be belted or hosed on their way to Granny's for pumpkin pie.

*—an announcement from [AAA Northeast](#), the regional affiliate of the American Automobile Association*

AAA Northeast reminds holiday travelers that cars, like humans, need seasonal checkups to maintain safety, maximize efficiency and prevent unexpected repair costs, especially on a holiday road trip.

Severe cold and wind are predicted for the holiday travel period this week. In fact, in the last century, according to the National Weather Service, Hartford's lowest recorded temp on November 22 was 14 degrees in 1969. This Thanksgiving, the lowest temperature is projected to be about 11 degrees.

"No one wants to be stranded in the cold," said Fran Mayko, AAA Northeast spokeswoman. "So properly preparing your vehicle for cold weather is essential."

There's still time to do a simple vehicle maintenance check before heading out for holiday vacations or family gatherings, said Mayko. To prepare for this week's anticipated adverse weather conditions, AAA Northeast offers drivers these tips:

**Batteries:** If your battery is more than three years old, have it **and** the charging system tested. Even a good battery can lose up to 50% of its capacity when temperatures drop to zero. At 32 degrees, it takes up to 30% more power to start a cold engine.

**Coolant:** Check the coolant level in the overflow tank when the engine is cold. If the level is low, add a 50/50 solution of coolant and water to maintain the necessary antifreeze capability. Test your antifreeze with an inexpensive tester from any auto parts store. Check hoses for leaks, cracks or loose clamps. Hoses that feel brittle or spongy when squeezed should be replaced.

**Oil:** Every car engine depends upon oil for lubrication. Oil that hasn't been changed regularly thickens and turns to a molasses-like substance. Synthetic oil is a benefit for every vehicle and allows for quicker starts in cold weather.

**Tires:** In areas with heavy snow, installing snow tires on all four wheels will provide the best traction. All-season tires work well in light-to-moderate snow conditions provided they have adequate tread depth. Replace any tire with less than 4/32 of an inch of tread. Check tire pressure in all five tires; as temperatures drop, so will tire pressure, typically by one pound-per-square inch for every 10 degrees. Find the proper pressure in your owner's manual or on the placard on the driver's side door pillar.

**Washer fluid:** Fill the windshield fluid reservoir with a winter cleaning solution that has antifreeze components. Look for fluid that protects well below freezing.

**Wipers:** Wiper blades should completely clear the glass with each swipe. Replace any blade that leaves streaks or misses spots. Consider installing wiper blades that wrap the blade frame in a rubber boot to prevent snow and ice buildup.

**Engine Warm up:** Extensive engine warm ups are no longer necessary even in very cold weather. A more fuel-efficient technique is to drive at a reasonable speed until the engine reaches operating temperature.

*AAA Northeast is a not-for-profit auto club with 67 offices in Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Jersey, New Hampshire and New York, providing more than 5.7 million local AAA members with travel, insurance, finance, and auto-related services.*