

Winterizing Your Truck

By RoadPro Family of Brands

There are some lucky OTR truckers whose tires will never touch snow or ice this winter, but for most drivers this is the time of year to get their trucks ready for cold weather.

(And even the drivers who stay down South shouldn't get too cocky. In recent years, snow and ice storms have hit Arkansas, Tennessee, North Carolina and even Georgia.) Better to prepare for the worst – and do it now before the cold weather hits.

Here's how to make sure your truck can handle whatever winter puts in its path:

Battery: Cold weather drains batteries fast. Check the age and strength of your battery.

Fuel additives: Every driver knows that diesel fuel can gel in extreme cold, but not everyone knows why. It's due to paraffin, a hydrocarbon found in diesel. Paraffin crystallizes in freezing temperatures, allowing any water in the fuel to emulsify and turn the diesel to slush. The solution is to use winter blend fuel with a high cetane rating and add anti-gel additives at each fill-up.

Cooling systems: Yes, you have to worry about cooling systems in cold weather. A comprehensive winterization check should include inspections of the radiator, belts and hoses for potential failures. Also, check the coolant to see if it's at the optimum freeze point.

Fuel filter and water separator: Monitor the truck's water separator daily and drain it when full to avoid contamination. Replacing old fuel filters also protects the engine.

Air dryer: The air dryer prevents water from entering the brake lines where it can freeze. Make sure it works and change the filter if needed.

Engine block heater: Since diesel engines require a higher cylinder temperature than gasoline vehicles, they are harder to start in the winter. Drivers who travel a lot through the coldest parts of the country should consider an electric engine block heater to use when the truck is parked for long periods of time.

Tire pressure: Cold weather can cause underinflated tires, which wear faster and hurt fuel mileage. Adjust the inflation accordingly.

Emergency supplies: Breakdowns in the summer are inconvenient; breakdowns in the winter can be dangerous. In addition to the usual emergency supplies, make sure to have cold-weather clothing and footwear, a shovel, flashlight with extra batteries, blankets, first aid kit, flares, radio, anti-gel fuel additive and food and water.

Of course, along with the equipment checks comes a reminder to drive safely in winter conditions.

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