

Winter Driving Check List

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When was your last tune up and overall check up of brakes, suspension, driveline, etc? Timing belt/alternator belt replacement? Oil change? This falls into 'normal' maintenance, so we won't belabor this too much. You all know what should be done and when! We will assume the engine, brakes, and suspension are in good shape.

Check fluid levels in transmission and differential. Lube all door locks, hinges, etc. Recommended engine oil weight for winter is 10/40.

Change your air cleaner setting to 'winter' setting, if so equipped.

Check cooling system for leaks. Check antifreeze level, replace if older than two years (don't forget to purge the air out of the cooling system!). Inspect the radiator cap.

Windshield Wipers: Replace old blades. Replace your regular washer fluid with winter-friendly washer fluid that is designed to not freeze.

Heater/Defroster: The heater and defroster must be in good working condition for passenger comfort and driver visibility. Clean out those drain vents under the windshield and lubricate the wiper transmission (very easy to remove and replace this panel) and heater box controls.

Battery: Check age, old batteries may fail when cold weather hits. Most batteries last three years no matter what the warranty says. Clean posts and cable connections (replace if bad); clean all surfaces (baking soda works well); re-tighten all connections, check water.

Lights: Inspect all lights and bulbs; replace burned out bulbs; periodically clean road grime from all lenses. Check turn signal operation. Check headlight alignment for best winter vision.

Exhaust System: Make sure it is in good condition with no leaks, exhaust fumes can be deadly.

Tires: Examine tires for remaining tread life, uneven wearing, and cupping; check the sidewalls for cuts and nicks. Check tire pressure regularly and only inflate to recommended (this doesn't mean maximum!) tire pressure. 'Normal' tire pressure for a Fiat is 28 to 30 lbs. Make sure your spare tire is in good shape and that you have a good working jack (we use a 'jack' type rather than a the Fiat one) with a tire iron you can use (Iron cross type works well).

Carry emergency gear: gloves, boots, blankets, flares, a small shovel, sand or kitty litter, tire chains, and a flash light. Consider carrying a small 'tool box' (the entire trunk area should work) with the basic Fiat socket/wrench sizes of 8, 10, & 13 mm, one Phillips head and one straight blade screwdriver, an adjustable (crescent) wrench, a test light, extra fuses, jumper cables, a gallon of water, a half-gallon of gas and a small 'cold fire' type of fire extinguisher.

Try to keep your gas tank far from empty at all times – ideally half full or more. This can prevent your gas lines from freezing due to condensation. You may want to put a fuel line dryer/antifreeze in occasionally.

Keep a can of d-icer on hand for when your locks freeze. Don't keep it in the car, because, well, you know.

It never hurts when you own a Fiat to have a AAA membership and a cell phone (with your favorite shop on speed dial, 425-226-5955)!