

Are you and your car ready for the winter weather?

Although it is hard to believe, winter weather will soon be making a return to the area and motorists are reminded that now is the time to get yourself and your motor vehicle ready for winter.

Those words are from Chief Superintendent Brad Blair, Regional Commander of the OPP Central Region.

By getting your vehicle winter-ready, this can be very simply done with a maintenance check-up, he added. A pre-winter check-up should include a physical inspection and testing of the battery, belts, hoses, radiator, oil, lights, brakes, tires, exhaust system, heater/defroster, wipers and ignition system by a trained automotive professional. Your fuel tank should always have at least half a tank of gas at all times once the weather turns colder and you need to make sure that you have sufficient windshield washer fluid in the reservoir that is rated at a minimum of -40 degrees Celsius. It is also very important to keep an extra jug in the vehicle.

Now is a good time to take your winter survival kit that has been stored in the garage or basement and put it back in your vehicle, Blair also suggested. It is very important to have essential supplies that can provide some comfort and safety for you and your passengers should you become stranded.

A recommended winter survival kit includes items like an ice scraper/snowbrush, shovel, sand or other traction aid, tow rope or chain, booster cables, road flares or warning lights, gas line antifreeze, flashlight and batteries, first aid kit, fire extinguisher, small tool kit, extra clothing and footwear, blanket, non-perishable energy foods (chocolate or granola bars, juice, soup, bottled water), candle and a small tin can and matches

When it comes to driving in winter, Blair supports the following advice offered by the Ministry of Transportation:

Stay alert Weather conditions can change quickly, placing extra demands on your vehicle and your driving skills. Keep your focus on the road and on other vehicles. Eliminate all distractions and make sure you are well rested.

Slow down Always drive according to weather conditions. Keep a safe distance between you and the vehicle in front of you to avoid having to brake suddenly on a slippery surface.

Stay in control Make sure you know how to handle your vehicle in all weather conditions.

Driving at any time of the year can have its unique challenges, but remembering these key components can help you make the adjustment that is required for safe winter driving, Blair said. The OPP's focus on road safety is a year round commitment and motorists are reminded that road safety is a shared responsibility.