

Don't ignore strength of car's antifreeze

Have it checked regularly to avoid ruining cooling system

A vehicle's cooling system can become a hot topic – especially during the winter season. Motorists should make it a habit to have their vehicles prepped for cold temperatures. But many fail to do so.

More than 70% of drivers fail to winterize their vehicles, according to a survey by the National Car Care Council. A factor that might be the main reason why cooling-system failure is the primary reason for engine-related roadside breakdowns.

Coolant – or antifreeze – is vital to a vehicle's health. It reduces an engine's temperature in the summer and keeps it from freezing in the winter. It protects the cooling system from rust, scale and corrosion year-round.

It's vital, to say the least.

Engine coolant doesn't lose its antifreeze capability, but rust and sediment eventually contaminate it. Have it tested annually for acid content.

The depletion of corrosion-protecting chemicals and water-pump lubricants weakens the coolant, causing it to begin eroding metal parts that could cause leaks, overheating and breakdowns. Common issues include water-pump failure and broken hoses. Periodically refreshing a vehicle's coolant also removes dirt and rust particles that could clog or ruin



COOL SUMMER – Making sure your vehicle's coolant system is filled with clean antifreeze can help avoid headaches on the highways. *Image: BLKstudio. Adobe Stock.*

a cooling system.

Antifreeze-recycling machines combine a flush-and-fill unit with a recycling station and are used by many repair shops. The machines flush the cooling system, cleanse old coolant and return it to the vehicle.

Protecting the system from freezing

or boiling over depends on whether the coolant had been diluted correctly. Coolant can expand and potentially damage an engine block when it freezes. Have your vehicle's cooling system tested, flushed and refilled as recommended by the manufacturer before the weather begins to change.

Check the coolant reservoir to ensure it's filled with the proper level of antifreeze. It's best to check the level before starting the vehicle. The reservoir should be filled to the "cold" indicator line. Periodically recheck the level. A 50/50 mix of coolant to water is sufficient for most regions of the U.S. Match new antifreeze with the same type in the vehicle. See the owner's manual for specific recommendations.

Carefully clean up spills. Antifreeze contains ethylene glycol and is toxic to people, pets and wildlife, and it doesn't organically decompose. Pets might find the fluid's sweet taste to be appealing.

Check the cap of your radiator for crystallized residue formed around the top of the cap when the engine is cold. It signifies restricted airflow and could result in overheating. Never remove the radiator cap when the engine is hot.

It's wise to keep your vehicle cool – especially during the winter season.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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