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**it's TIME to WINTERIZE**

Old Man Winter is quickly approaching, which leaves drivers only a few weeks to prepare their vehicle tires for inclement weather. The American Automobile Association sees an increase in tire-related calls in the winter, from tire damage caused by potholes, ice chunks and other road hazards, to vehicles sliding off the slick

roadways due to worn tire treads. Winterizing tires now can help drivers stay safe and save money. Replacing a tire can cost an average of \$150 or more per tire, compared to the negligible and often free cost of maintaining tires.

"Drivers often don't think about tires until there is a problem or cost involved," said Jim Hanni, execu-

tive vice president at AAA. "A few simple tips can help drivers prepare tires for winter to stay safe on the road and save money."

AAA recommends the following tips to help drivers to get ready for the winter driving season:

- Check tire pressure. Proper inflation during winter keeps vehicles and drivers safe. If pressure is too low, the tires may become damaged. If pressure is too high, drivers risk prematurely wearing out tires. Tire pressure should be checked monthly.

- Check tread depth. As tires wear, tread depth gets shorter and provides less traction in rain and snow. Drivers can check tread by inserting a penny upside-down into tire treads. If drivers can see all of Lincoln's head, it's time to replace tires.

- Rotate and balance tires every 6,000 miles. Tire rotation and balance, ensures proper tire wear helping tires last longer. Tires that are expected to last 60,000 miles can wear out as quickly as 20,000 miles without the proper rotation and balance. Tire rotation and balance is often provided free of charge at the location consumers purchased tires, or can be done for a nominal fee at auto repair and maintenance locations.

- Have alignment inspected annually. Wheel alignment also prevents uneven tire wear, making for safer driving on the road during inclement weather.

- Make sure the spare tire is inflated and undamaged. Also,



check that all the necessary tools to remove and attach a spare tire are in the vehicle to avoid being stuck on the side of the road longer than necessary.

- Inspect valve stoppers. Missing valve stoppers on tires can cause rust or corrosion on tire valve stems, making it difficult or impossible to properly inflate tires and ultimately lead to a tire replacement.

AAA provides travel, insurance, financial and automotive-related services to 52 million members nationwide. Since its founding in 1902, AAA has been a leading advocate for motorists and consumers. For more information about AAA, members and non-members can visit AAA offices in Topeka, Wichita, Manhattan or Lawrence, go online to AAA.com or call (800) 365-5222.

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