

Three basic steps to help avoid being stranded in the Texas heat



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Extreme heat is one thing that is guaranteed in Texas during the summer months. Whether you've lived in Texas for 30 years or 3 months, you know that it is unbearably hot during summer. To take it one step further, your car knows how hot it is outside as well. Your car may not speak, but it has subtle ways of telling you that it needs some attention. Failure to maintain your car properly in the summer may land you stranded on the side of the road in 100+

degree heat. There are three simple steps you can take to help keep your car running well in the extreme heat.

The first part of your car that may fail in extreme hot temperature are the tires. Hot roads, under-inflated tires, and worn down tread may lead to tire failure and damage to your vehicle or even worse, an accident. Tire pressure builds in hot weather and when driving on the hot roads, so if your tires are under-inflated or in poor condition your tires are at risk for tire failure. Keep a tire pressure gage in your car and check the tire pressure in your car at least once a week. The recommended

tire pressure for your car should be posted on the inside of the doors, glove box, or owners manual. The manufacturers tire pressure recommendation is based on taking the tire pressure when the tires are cold (not been driven for a while causing them to warm up).

The second area to check on your car is the battery. Car batteries don't take kindly to the heat. Extreme heat will shorten the battery life and may leave you stuck in a hot parking lot unable to start your car. Check your battery terminals to ensure that the connections are clean and free from dirt and corrosion. Check your battery cables and terminals for dirt and corrosion buildup and, if any is found, carefully clean the area with a wire brush and towel. Dirt and corrosion will drain your battery causing premature failure. Most auto parts stores offer free charging system checks. Drive your car up to your local part store such as **AutoZone** and ask them to check your charging system for any problems. If any issues are found with your charging system, they will help you diagnose it and provide you with the parts to do the repairs if you are mechanically inclined enough to do the work yourself. If not, take your car to a qualified mechanic for repairs before your charging system fails and leaves you stranded.

The third, and potentially most damaging to your car, is cooling system failure. The cooling system is just what it sounds like, it keeps your engine temperature cool so that your engine doesn't overheat. The high temperatures during Texas summers put tremendous strain on the engine and the cooling system. If your car overheats you can cause severe damage to your engine and it will leave you stranded on the side of the road waiting for rescue. Periodically check under the hood for broken, worn, or cracked hoses which could break while driving. One of the best things you can do is keep an eye on the temperature gauge on the instrument panel in your car. You should have an idea of where the needle normally points on your car at the engines normal operating temperature. If you see the temperature start to rise from this point towards the "hot" section of the temperature gauge, immediately pull off the road to inspect what may be causing this and to allow the engine to cool. If there is steam flowing out from under your hood let the car cool down before lifting

the hood. When the engine has cooled off, raise the hood and inspect the hoses for any leaks and visually check the radiator fluid level on the radiator overflow tank (Do Not remove the radiator cap until the engine has completely cooled down). Smell under the hood for a sweet smell. This sweet smell is usually associated with radiator fluid and is a sign that there may be a leak or overflow. Also check the engine hoses, engine compartment, and ground under the engine for spilled or leaked radiator fluid. The color of most radiator fluid is green or orange. However, some manufacturers are orange or red. If there is radiator fluid on the ground or in the engine, then you may have a leak or broken hose that will need to be replaced before you can safely drive your vehicle.

Following the steps above will help you avoid some of the common summer automotive issues and help keep you from breaking down and being stranded when driving in the extreme Texas heat. Keep an eye on your car, keep up with preventive maintenance, and listen to your car when it is trying to tell you that something is wrong.

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