



NOVA SCOTIA AUTOMOBILE DEALERS ASSOCIATION



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Preparing ride for winter

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Nova Scotia's winters are tough on our minds, bodies and souls. For our vehicles, it isn't much better.

That's why it's so crucial to have our vehicles serviced prior to winter.

Now more than ever, there is a need to have vehicles looked over.

Because of the recent legislative change which no longer requires safety inspections every year, it means vehicles are going longer and longer without being inspected.

"We don't have the opportunity to look at cars as often," says Ron May, president of Sydney Mazda.

This is especially relevant given the summer heat will tend to wear down a vehicle's fluids faster than any other time of the year.

As well, because people tend to drive more during the summer, the vehicle needs to be examined because of the increased usage that has taken place.

Some of the things that should be looked at in a winter vehicle inspection are the hoses, belts, brakes and suspension, especially given our poor roads are harsh on these components.

"They need a little extra care," says May.

It is also important the fluids in

a vehicle be looked at to ensure that not only are there enough fluids, but that they are of the right composition.

For example, a vehicle's anti-freeze needs to have the right balance of water and antifreeze to ensure that it won't freeze on even the coldest winter days.

As well, a vehicle should have winter windshield washer fluid in it as the fluid designed for spring/summer can freeze in winter.

The battery must also be inspected as it is the heart of the vehicle.

The question of whether to put winter tires on a vehicle is a popular one.

Currently, it isn't legally mandated in Nova Scotia, but the reality is winter tires have a different rubber composition than summer tires which allows them to provide better grip in colder temperatures.

Because they have better treads, they handle better in snowy and icy conditions.

May says the ideal time to put on winter tires was actually about three weeks ago and recommends they be put on for Nov. 1 so that people can beat the rush that inevitably occurs after the first big snowfall of the year.

One other thing people want to do to get their vehicle ready for winter is put together an emergency vehicle kit.

"It sounds kind of odd when you live in a town," says May, but he adds that people usually will end up travelling in some isolated places over the course of winter, so it's a good idea to always have one.

While people can buy emergency kits, they can just as easily put together one themselves. May recommends the kit include an ice scraper, shovel, blanket, first aid kit and some sand (or kitty litter) for traction.

If people are looking to build a more elaborate kit, some things they can include are a flashlight, matches, extra clothing, flares and some food (such as chocolate, nuts and dried fruit).

KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR FRAUDULENT INSURANCE

While modern technology has made it easier than ever to get auto insurance, it has also made it easier to get ripped off.

"With the anonymity and ease of classified websites, we have seen a sharp increase in the amount of fake motor vehicle liability insurance cards, also known as pink slips, being sold online," said James Russell, the chief underwriting officer for Aviva Canada in a recent statement.

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In particular, the news release pointed to classified websites such as Kijiji and Craigslist.

Scams like this carry a lot of risk for drivers because they are ultimately just buying an expensive piece of paper.

"Any driver using a fake insurance slip instead of securing valid coverage could potentially be sued for millions of dollars," said Russell.

As well, because it is illegal to drive without insurance, a person with a false insurance card could be charged with a criminal offence.

Aviva's news release suggested some ways for consumers to protect themselves from obtaining fraudulent insurance:

- Never meet in a public place with someone that claims to be an insurance representative. Insurance brokers/insurers will have branded websites and/or an office, so they won't likely ask to conduct a transaction in a public place.

- Report it – if enough consumers alert authorities of this activity, fraudsters will be easier to capture and convict.

- If a deal seems too good to be true, it likely is.

New car dealers incur significant risks in running their businesses

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While the sign outside any car dealership will boast the name of one or more of the major vehicle manufacturers, the reality is the people who own and run the dealerships are entrepreneurs with strong ties to our communities.

These people make an important economic contribution, as well as undertake significant risk in running their businesses.

For example, take a look at

Atlantic Acura, a family-owned and operated dealership located on the Bedford Highway in Halifax. It just spent \$3 million on a complete renovation/rebuild of its showroom and service centre.

"It's a big capital investment," says Brian Hill, Atlantic Acura's vice president.

The new facility offers three times the showroom space as the old one and has an environment which is more open, airy and conducive to doing business.

As well, the waiting room in the service centre is much more customer centric and features free

wireless internet access, coffee, yogurt and breakfast items.

"We're finding that our customers are staying here with us and don't mind waiting the hour or two to have their vehicle serviced," says Hill.

While investing in a new facility is ultimately about improving customer satisfaction and generating increased sales, it is a risky venture – and not only for cost reasons.

Because the construction process took about a year to complete, it was a challenging year to conduct business at Atlantic

Acura because of the limited amount of room the dealership had to work with as it went on with its day-to-day business while carrying out significant renovations. With a staff of over 30 people, this was a major undertaking.

Even people who aren't customers of Atlantic Acura or employees of the dealership benefit from this project.

Because the new facility will be worth significantly more money than the old one, it will result in increased property tax revenues for the city. As well, the construc-

tion process employed many different trades, thereby helping support the local economy.

At present, new car and truck dealerships employ close to 4,400 people in Nova Scotia and are an important economic generator.

Projects such as the Atlantic Acura one reinforce the important role they play in our economy, as well as the risks they undertake to grow their businesses (and our economy).

■ John K. Sutherland is executive vice president of the Nova Scotia Automobile Dealers Association.

FROM PAGE F1: 2014 IMPALA

Of course, to keep you out of accidents in the first place, a number of other advanced systems are at play.

Impala watches its surroundings continually via cameras and radar, alerting drivers of potential hazards while changing lanes, cruising along or backing up.

It can even pre-warn you if you're about to rear-end someone.

On the open highway at speed, wind and road noise levels are about average for the segment: not mind-blowingly quiet but kept

well in check.

Impala's suspension is comfort first, though it's not floaty and geriatric, nor is it opposed to being thrown into a bend at speed.

Pretty much just right for a touch of sportiness alongside some long-haul comfort.

Moving the tester along was the Impala's top-line engine: GM's go-to 3.6-litre V6. The powerplant was recently given a do-over by engineers to turn in reduced weight and more power.

For Impala duty, it makes 305 horsepower and uses Direct Injection and Variable Valve Timing systems as its main weapons

against excessive fuel consumption.

Full-throttle jam for passing or merging should prove adequate for most, and driven gently, the big V6 barely makes a peep.

After a week at the wheel, I averaged a thrifty 9L / 100km combined in city and speedy highway driving.

For a 300-plus-horsepower sedan of this size, I was expecting a much bigger fuel bill.

Other notable attributes included the light steering effort and delightfully tight turning circle in parking situations, and above-average performance from the xenon headlights at night.

End of the day, the all-new Impala is a big sedan packed with a big list of highly-relevant feature content, and should prove a car with many strengths and only a few weaknesses.

Noted complaints included tight headroom for taller drivers and an instrument cluster that's just plain boring compared to the rest of the cabin, even if it's easy to read.

With great mileage, plenty of confidence, plenty of space and plenty of comfort, Impala should be considered a priority test-drive for shoppers after a stylish sedan that's ready for long distance travels.

2014 CHEVY IMPALA LTZ

- Engine: 3.6-litre V6, Direct Injection, 305 horsepower
- Drivetrain: front-wheel drive
- Transmission: six-speed auto
- Fuel economy: 9.0 litres/100km
- Features: navigation, climate-controlled seats, OnStar, xenon lights, Bose audioWhat's Hot: big and comfortable, fantastic fuel mileage, highly-relevant technologies, magnificent cabin, ready for confident long-distance travelsWhat's Not: small side mirrors limit rearward visibility, plain-Jane instruments, tight headroom for taller drivers.
- Base price: \$28,445
- Price as tested: \$45,000