Start Strong All Winter Long With Battery Tips From AutoZone

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MEMPHIS, Tenn., Jan. 14 /PRNewswire/ -- Nothing can ruin your day like a dead battery. Dead batteries are all too common this time of year, and automotive batteries aren't designed to last forever. In most cases, a battery only lasts about four years. Do you know when your battery was last replaced? If not, you're gambling with your safety. So how can you avoid getting stranded?

AutoZone says it's important to know the warning signs of battery failure. Even though today's automotive batteries and electrical systems are more dependable than ever, automotive industry statistics show that the life expectancy of most original equipment (that is, the parts installed at the factory) batteries is only around four years. If your battery is more than three years old, you may have already experienced some of the warning signs of failure, like slow starts, dimming lights, or multiple jump-starts. These are sure signals of a bad battery, and should be acted on immediately. Unfortunately, batteries can also fail without any warning, so battery testing is important to stay safe.

Have your battery tested. Years of extreme heat, cold and vibration take their toll on your battery, making it less effective over time. Winter weather can amplify any problems, with the cold dramatically reducing a battery's available starting power. That's why it's a good idea to have your car's starting and charging system tested every six months.

Inspect your battery cables, posts, and fasteners. In many cases, a good battery has been blamed for starting problems caused by frayed or corroded battery cables. Some estimates suggest that one out of every five cars on the road has a problem with battery accessories that could lead to battery failure. Make sure your cables are in good shape and are secured firmly to the battery.

Install a set of battery washers. One way to make a good battery last longer is to prevent corrosion with a set of battery washers. It's also a good idea to apply a liberal coating of corrosion resistance spray to your battery posts and terminals.

Make sure a bad battery is the problem. Often batteries wear out over time, but another common cause for battery failure is a defective alternator. In fact, a bad alternator can kill a perfectly good battery. That's why it's important to bring your car to AutoZone for a complete starting and charging system test, for free. This can help you make sure your battery, starter, and alternator are all working like they should.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW WHEN BUYING A NEW BATTERY:

There are a number of factors to consider when purchasing a new battery, including cranking power, warranty, and price. Here are some tips for selecting the proper one for your vehicle.

Check your owner's manual. There you'll find the right size battery for your vehicle. Some batteries are available as top-post or side-post versions, so check under the hood to see which one you need.

Check your CCAs. When the temperature falls below freezing, the power required to start your car increases, but your battery's cranking power drops by 33 percent. If winter temperatures regularly drop below freezing where you live, make sure your battery has the highest level of cold cranking amps, or CCAs, available.

Check the warranty. There are usually two parts to a battery's warranty -- the free replacement period (usually between 90 days and three years), and the prorated warranty, under which a percentage of the purchase price is refunded based on the length of ownership (generally between three and eight years). If you expect to keep your car for a number of years, consider purchasing a battery with a longer warranty.

About AutoZone:

As of November 20, 2004, the Company had 3,448 stores in 48 states plus the District of Columbia in the U.S. and 64 stores in Mexico. AutoZone is the nation's leading retailer of automotive parts and accessories. Each store carries an extensive product line for cars, sport utility vehicles, vans and light trucks, including new and remanufactured automotive hard parts, maintenance items, accessories, and non-automotive products. Many domestic stores also have a commercial sales program that provides commercial credit and prompt delivery of parts and other products to local, regional and national repair garages, dealers and service stations. AutoZone also sells the ALLDATA brand diagnostic and repair software. On the web, AutoZone sells diagnostic and repair information and auto and light truck parts through http://www.autozone.com . AutoZone does not derive revenue from automotive repair or installation.

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