

Here are the must-have 20 Items that should be a part of your winter Car Emergency Kit:



1. Charged cell phone. Although this item will probably be on your person, it may make the difference between getting help fast and maybe not getting help at all. Make sure it is properly charged every time you get into your car.

2. First-aid kit. As well as an assortment of Band-Aids, it should include adhesive tape, gauze pads, aspirin, antiseptic wipes, antiseptic cream or ointment, and anything particular to you or your family.

3. Fire Extinguisher. It should be rated for Class B and Class C fires by the National Fire Protection Association, or NFPA. The NFPA says Class B fires are those that involve flammable or combustible liquids, such as gasoline, diesel fuel and kerosene. Class C fires involve energized electrical equipment such as switches, panel boxes and batteries.

4. Three reflective warning triangles. While many prepackaged emergency kits contain one warning triangle, you should have three that are placed 50 feet apart to warn oncoming traffic.

5. Tire gauge. Motorists should use the tire gauge in their car emergency kit to periodically check the air pressure in their spare tire. "Make sure your spare tire is properly inflated," he says. "A lot of the time people ignore it until they have a flat, and then discover the spare is flat, too."

6. Foam tire sealant. A quick, inexpensive way to repair many flats without changing the tire.

7. Jumper cables. They should be at least 10 feet in length and coated with at least 8-gauge rubber.

8. Waterproof Flashlight and extra batteries.

9. Gloves.

10. Rags.

11. Duct tape. It is the universal fix-it solution. Carry at least 10 feet of it.

12. Tow strap or tow rope. It should be strong enough to tow 6,000 pounds.

13. Multipurpose utility tool. This can be something like a Leatherman Tool or a Swiss Army Knife.

14. Rain poncho. Even an inexpensive plastic poncho is better than nothing when changing a tire in the pouring rain.

15. Drinking water.

16. Nonperishable snacks. Protein bars are a good choice.

During the winter you should add a few other items if you might encounter snow and ice:

17. Warm blanket.

18. Snow shovel.

19. Cat litter. It works as well as sand beneath the tires for traction and weighs less.

20. Windshield ice scraper.

Although many prepackaged car emergency kits contain a few tools like pliers and a screwdriver, these aren't must-have items. "In the old days," he says, "you could do some roadside repairs yourself, but today's cars are too complicated for that. The tools you do need to be concerned about are those that came with the car, along with the jack, to change a tire. Make sure those tools are there."