

Preparing Your Special Mustang for Storage During the Winter Months

By Fred Immediato



Here are some thoughts and suggestions to Mustang Club members on ways to store your car during the winter months. My suggestions are meant to refer to special cars (what might be considered "show cars" by some), or cars which are given special attention by owners and not driven on the road during winter months.

Weather and temperature conditions vary, but generally speaking I plan to take the car off the road during the first week of December.

The first thing to do before putting the car away in the garage for the winter is to fill the gas tank with premium, high octane fuel. Two cans of dry gas will help to keep the gas lines from freezing.

While at the gas station filling your tank, it is a good idea to inflate the car's tires to their maximum pressure. Having the tires filled to maximum pressure creates a better air seal for the tire and helps to give the car better support while standing in the garage over the winter months.

A good wash and wax is next to clean and seal the body finish. I take the car for a short ride around the block after I wash it to shake out water that collects in the body panels. After the ride I hand dry the trunk, hood and door frames and edges.

I recommend a light coat of wax on all chrome parts (bumpers, lights, etc.) to be left on for the entire winter stor-

age. This coating of wax helps to seal the metal from moisture during the cold months and helps to prevent the chrome from pitting.

Tires and any rubber or vinyl materials should be given a heavy treatment of Armorall protective spray. I use the Armorall brand spray and can recommend it as a quality product (other brands now on the market are probably similar in quality). Using Armorall protects the rubber and vinyl and helps to prevent cracking and drying from the frigid temperatures.

The cooling system should be flushed every two winters (or summers) and then filled with a 50 /50 mixture of quality antifreeze and water. This

should be standard maintenance for all cars. Regular changing of the cooling system will keep the antifreeze from wearing out and turning the inside of the car's radiator to rust. I do not use any of the current radiator "flush" products now advertised. I flush the system with running water from a garden hose and opening the release valve at the bottom of the radiator, so the system gets a constant stream of clean water and is thoroughly cleaned out.

Like antifreeze, motor oil changes should follow standard maintenance procedures. It would be advisable to arrange the timing of your motor oil change so that it is done before the car is put away into winter storage.

For maintenance during the cold weather months, I like to start my engine every two to three weeks. I let the car idle until it reaches normal operating temperature. This keeps a fresh film of oil on vital engine parts to ensure constant lubrication. If a car sits for long periods of time without being started, motor oil will run off the engine parts from the force of gravity. If a car sits for an extended period of time without being started (say six to eight weeks), motor parts can become almost completely stripped of lubricant. This can lead to serious engine damage from metal friction when the car is eventually started.

Along with regular starting and warm-up of the engine I like to drive the car up and down the driveway, or if possible, within the garage space. This movement lubricates the transmission, the rear end and, most importantly, the brakes. This helps prevent brake pads from rusting to the drums or the brake cylinders from rusting in their bores. Before shutting down the engine it is a good idea to turn on the radio, windshield wipers, heater and air conditioning to be sure that they are all in proper working order.

After turning off the ignition always disconnect one of the battery cables so the car will be left completely dead. This guarantees that there is no electrical power in the system; in case a light or the radio is left on by mistake it would be a continual drain on the electrical system, killing the battery. Disconnecting one of the battery cables prevents this from happening. There is also a safety advantage in disconnecting the battery: if a wire in the electrical system becomes broken or exposed there is the chance that it could short circuit, throw sparks and start a fire. Disconnecting the battery defuses such a potential hazard.

Some car owners may wish to go all out and completely remove the battery

from under the hood. This not only serves the already mentioned safety precautions, but also provides simple yet effective anti-theft protection. For more extensive anti-theft measures I would suggest the removal of the rotor cap and distributor cables. The only disadvantage to this is that you must take the trouble to re-install them when you start the car for regular maintenance every two to three weeks. However, this extra effort may be worth the peace of mind that it provides.

To really pamper my Mustang I cover it with a car cover and put pads or blankets over the hood and fenders. This is an added measure of protection for the car against the freezing temperatures. Finally, I inspect the garage to make sure that no accidents will happen, like tools falling off the wall and hitting the car. I always lock the garage door to be sure that my Mustang will still be around come springtime, when the flowers bloom, the robins sing and the breezes are sweet and mild.

Before leaving the garage I always check to make sure that there aren't any kids hiding outside, waiting to throw snowballs at me. I tell you, these punk kids in my neighborhood have no respect! They're all against me!

