

HIBERNATION TIPS FOR BIRDS

It certainly has been a nice fall for driving our Thunderbirds. With mid-November temperatures in the 50's and 60's, I am dreaming that this weather continues through March. Very soon it will be time to put our Thunderbirds away to protect them from the harsh winter. Always remember to never leave a collector car, boat, or any vehicle outside to the elements. Moisture and humidity wreak havoc on cylinder walls, electrical systems, weather stripping, chrome, and many other systems of any vehicle. It is cheaper to pay for indoor storage than the damage that will occur to any vehicle stored outside during our harsh winters. Club member, Bud Gibson and I have seen many good condition cars and boats reduced to parts from poor outside storage. The following list is compiled from my reading of trade journals and magazines.

- Clean the area in which the vehicle will be stored. A clean area keeps the dirt off the vehicle and eliminates building supplies for vermin. Make sure there isn't anything hanging from the walls or ceiling that may fall on the vehicle over the winter.
- Inspect the building in which the vehicle will be stored. Make sure water and animals don't have easy access, and if they do, repair the building. Inspect the roof to make sure it will be stable under a load of snow. If not, reinforce the roof or consider another storage location. There are many sob stories of cars crushed by snow burdened roof during the winter months, especially in pole buildings. Don't let your vehicles be casualties.
- That leads to insurance. The vehicle may not be driven during the winter, but that doesn't mean the coverage should lapse. Carry at least storage insurance, and remember to review your policy again in the spring so that the vehicle is again covered while being driven on the street.
- Wash the vehicle thoroughly, top to bottom, inside and out. Dirt and leaves hold moisture to the metal and cause corrosion. Dirty or scummy pot metal, plated or otherwise, will pit over time. Food or other debris inside the vehicle attracts vermin. Allow the clean vehicle to completely dry before parking it. Consider waxing the paint and chrome to add an extra level of corrosion protection.

- At your discretion, change fluids, brake, oil, coolant, transmission, differential, and repair fluid leaks before storage to prevent moisture from entering mechanical components. This will also prevent leaking fluids from damaging items in the storage facility. Verify the coolant protection exceeds the coldest temperature your area may experience. Lubricate the chassis.
- Whether you subscribe to the full or empty fuel tank philosophy, it is wise to add a fuel stabilizer to keep whatever gasoline is in the tank from going bad. Use ethanol free fuel whenever possible especially when storing a vehicle; fuel with ethanol will undergo phase separation in six months, if you have no other choice other than to use ethanol, use a fuel additive to prevent phase separation or burn existing fuel within six months.
- Place animal repellants in the passenger compartment, trunk, and engine compartments. Some people suggest fresh dryer sheets, fresh Irish Spring soap shavings, mouse poison, and or moth balls. Regardless of the repellant of choice, make sure it is removed in the spring. Check the vehicle periodically to make sure critters haven't made a home inside of it.
- Place a sheet of plastic or other moisture barrier beneath the vehicle. This will catch leaking fluids and also prevent moisture from collecting on the bottom of the stored vehicle.
- Remove the battery so you don't have to worry about an acid leak damaging the battery tray and surrounding metal. Place the battery on a Trickle Charger if possible. Don't store the battery on concrete.
- Cover the rear tips of the exhaust to prevent mice and other critters from crawling inside. Leftover screen material secured to the tips by clamps or rubber bands will allow the exhaust to safely function if you forget to remove the screen in the spring.
- Some hobbyists believe in periodically starting the vehicle over the course of winter to keep engine components lubricated. We don't believe in starting the vehicle till spring when we are ready to drive it and the fluids, especially the oil, are more viscous in the warmer temperatures.

Happy Holidays to All,

Larry L. Sneary

Next newsletter, winter time projects for our T-Birds.

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Staff, O.C. (2015, October 22). The OCW Winter Storage Checklist. Old Cars Weekly News and Marketplace, p.51.