



# The Daily Gleaner

## Green travelling even in cold weather

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Winter is just around the corner - though I know it doesn't seem like it with the lovely warm weather we've had these past weeks! Even so, this is the time of year when we start thinking about getting our winter tires on. And why stop there? This is the perfect time to make sure your vehicle is completely well-tuned and ready for colder days, different road conditions and unpredictable weather. Having a well-tuned vehicle can make winter travel safer for you and your family, lower your gas consumption, and reduce your greenhouse gas emissions too!

For instance replacing a clogged air filter can improve your car's fuel efficiency by as much as 10 percent. Cold winter weather can also have an effect on tire pressure – maintaining the correct tire pressure can improve the efficiency of your car by at least 5 percent. You can also remove the travel rack from the roof of your vehicle which increases your car's aerodynamics and improves gas mileage by another 5 percent. Just think if extra weight on your car reduces its efficiency – that means that heavy snow can do the same. Doing a good clean up of your vehicle after a snowfall will increase your gas mileage and your visibility!

There are other eco-friendly benefits to winter driving as well. Often we drive slower and tend to be more cautious on icy, snowy or unpredictable roadways. This is a good thing - since driving aggressively such as speeding, rapid acceleration and hard braking is unsafe and increases your gas consumption significantly. In fact, it can lower your gas mileage by as much as 30 percent at highway speeds and by 5 percent in the city. Driving at 90 km/h uses 30 percent less fuel than driving at higher speeds, which also means you pay less at the pump!

I know it is colder in the winter and we all like to jump into a nice warm car in the morning, but unlike vehicles a few decades ago, newer automobiles don't need to idle to warm up the engine. Vehicle engines warm up most quickly when being driven. And idling for more than a few minutes can actually be harmful to the engine, particularly when it is very cold. Not to mention, idling means you get zero miles to the gallon!

And why not dress for the weather even when you are just jumping in your car for a short trip? Wear gloves, a hat and a warm coat so your chilly vehicle in the early morning doesn't seem so cold – then you won't be tempted to idle to warm it up! The same is true if you are doing errands and pick-ups - even in cold weather try not to idle in parking lots and at the curb while waiting for someone. Just dress for the weather and turn your car off – even a few minutes matter in terms of reducing your carbon emissions.

Finally, when thinking about how you travel this winter, remember that there will be those glorious winter days... when the sun is shining and the sidewalks are clear – these are the days to leave your car at home and walk instead. This travel choice is always better for your health and the environment. And one has to think it will be at least a month until the snow flies, so in the meantime keep walking and biking – it will help keep you active and cheery on those grey November days!

Valerie Hillier is a Frederictonian who looks for ways to conserve energy, waste less and challenge herself to do more for the health of our planet. In her weekly e-letter 'A Challenge to Inconvenience Yourself', she challenges people to live more responsibly and provides them with ideas about how to do it. This week she challenges you to travel with 'green' in mind!