

Spring Start Up Tips:

Most of you have cabin fever and are waiting with baited breath to get your cars out on the road. From time to time, many of you ask about my procedures for getting a classic car out of dead storage. Here is what I do:

Carefully remove the car cover, then bring it outside and shake it vigorously to remove all dust and dirt that may have accumulated during the long winter. Fold the cover properly and store it in its bag. Carefully wipe the car down with a damp chamois. Hopefully, you have a trickle battery charger (Battery Tender) on the vehicle all winter long to prevent the battery from going dead. Remove the charger, clean the battery terminals, and reconnect the battery.

Check all of the fluids to be sure everything is full. Carefully check the entire car for “critters” that may have taken up residence in cozy places like the air breather or exhaust system. I usually cover the tail pipes with duck tape when I put a car away to insure rodents don't take up residence there. If you have done that, remove the duck tape. Also, remove any decadent from the interior or trunk area.

Get into the car and check the brakes. Sometimes, during long storage, things happen to the master cylinder or wheel cylinders due to lack of use. Never start the car without knowing the brakes are operating properly. Next start the car and move it outside. Let the car run until it reaches operating temperature. While the car is running, check everything over, under, in, and out for leaks or problems. Remember to look on the passenger floor for antifreeze leaks caused by a defective heater core. Just because the car was inoperative during the winter, that doesn't mean things can't go wrong.

Once the engine is fully warmed up, back the car into the storage area, shut it down and jack it up, front and rear, and place jack stands in order to raise the entire vehicle. Remove the engine oil plug using gloves for protection as you want to be sure you drain the oil hot to remove any suspended particles that would not drain out when cold. While the oil is draining, move toward the back of the car. If your car is equipped with a standard transmission, pull the fill plug and check the gear oil level. Then move to the rear and do the same thing with the rear differential. While there, check EVERYTHING for leaks. It's also a good time to check all four tires for age cracks, nails or other objects that may be puncturing your tires, and check the air pressure.

Refill the engine with fresh high quality oil. Fill your oil filter with fresh oil, rub some fresh oil on the filter gasket and after checking the filter housing to be sure the old gasket didn't get stuck there, and install the new filter. Grease all zerk fittings through out the front end and the rest of the car. Restart the car and check for leaks. Once that process has been completed, adjust the brakes on all four wheels. If your brakes have not been bled in the past three years, now is the time to bleed the brakes insuring fresh brake fluid and no moisture in the system.

Prior to storing a car, always change the oil and filter so that the engine doesn't get stored with old acidic oil. Acidic oil will etch the engine bearings. In the spring, strange as it sounds change the oil again insuring the removal of all contaminants that accumulate over the winter storage. It sounds frivolous, but it's the cheapest insurance you will ever have!

Road test the car to be sure everything is OK. Then, completely clean the car in and out and wax it thoroughly. Storing your classic properly in the winter, and removing it from storage properly in the spring will give you many years of trouble free driving. Enjoy!

Happy Motoring,

Dennis M. Vieira