



Havoline®

Are Your Customers “Road Ready” for Winter?

How to instill customer trust and loyalty through winter months

BY BILL BEYERLE, AUTOMOTIVE INSTALLED SALES MANAGER, CHEVRON LUBRICANTS

Falling leaves in October are a reminder of what’s right around the corner: falling snow. At least in much of the country. Even in areas that don’t get much snowfall, the days are getting darker and average daily temperatures are dropping. That represents an opportunity for you. Now is the time to ask: Are your customers “road ready” for rough weather ahead?

Your bread and butter may be oil change services, but your customers still look to your shop as a trusted, automotive expert. Successful shops go above and beyond what the customer comes in for. And it doesn’t cost more than a little time. Making sure your customers are prepared for winter, or at least aware of what their vehicles need, is one of the most important services you can provide. Few experiences in life are worse than a breakdown in bad weather.

Winter preparation checklists are easy to find on the internet. They typically include:

- Checking coolant or antifreeze levels, checking the cooling system for leaks including the pressure cap, and performing a flush if necessary.
- Checking windshield wiper fluid and topping off if needed.
- Checking to see that wiper blades are in good working order.
- Checking tire tread depth and tire pressure to make sure the car has adequate traction for wet or icy roads.
- General check of belts, hoses, battery power and fluids.
- Checking lights, especially brake lights and blinkers.
- Promoting full synthetic oil for better cold-start performance.

Whether or not you sell the products or services associated with these needs, you can still offer to perform an inspection and give the customer a written service recommendation—even if they end up having the services performed elsewhere. Of course, if you do sell tires, coolants, wiper blades, or perform basic mechanic services, this is an opportunity to make add-on sales. But that is not your primary objective. The important thing is to depart trust, confidence, and give customers peace of mind by demonstrating that you care about them, so that they will think of you first when their cars need service—and refer family and friends.

October and November are a good time to run a “Road Ready” promotion, such as a free 30-point inspection with every oil change.

This will help drive traffic to your store by reminding customers that they really should have their cars inspected and serviced before the weather really turns.

COVID-19 is not yet in the rear-view mirror, which means operators have to be creative about advertising and promotions. Face coverings, plexiglass shields, using handheld wireless payment devices, and social distancing are essential for public safety and all part of doing business these days. But they definitely inhibit in-person conversation. That’s why having a mobile-responsive website, social media accounts (Instagram and Facebook), and a

customer email database are more important than ever. You can use these digital channels to advertise your seasonal promotion and post your road ready checklist to motivate customers to schedule appointments online.

“We take our responsibility to our customers and their vehicle health very seriously,” says Todd Rodenburg, owner of Green Mountain Havoline® xpress lube® in Denver. “Winter driving in Colorado can get dangerous and we know people need to be able to depend on their cars. Our vehicle inspections are a way for us to help our customers prevent any future service problems—or worse yet, unexpected breakdowns. We pride ourselves in making sure any car that leaves our shop is in good working condition.”

Some shops go so far as to sell winter emergency kits with collapsible snow shovels, jumper cables, flashlights and batteries, and other essentials a stranded motorist would be thankful to have. If you aren’t in a position to do that, you can always ask customers if they have a kit in their car and direct them to an auto parts store or an online resource. It’s helpful to study the options available so you know what to recommend.

Your customer’s safety is your top priority. By showing that you are looking out for them, you are also reinforcing the relationship, building trust, and engendering loyalty that will benefit your business over the long haul.

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—Bill Beyerle, automotive installed sales manager, Chevron Lubricants

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