



Keep Your Cool While Your Car Sizzles

(Is Your Battery at Risk?)

Summer heat waves do more than make motorists hot under the collar, they also make automobiles fry and batteries fail. Whether in the searing Southwest or sweltering East and Midwest, motorists should check the condition of their car batteries.

“Contrary to what most people think, high heat is more brutal on a car battery than extreme cold”, says Mike Dever, vice president of battery manufacturer, Exide Technologies. Princeton-based Exide is a global leader in lead acid batteries for automotive and marine applications, battery-powered vehicles, and computer & telecommunications networks.

Heat speeds up all chemical reactions. Because a car battery works by producing a chemical reaction, motorists with older batteries might get stranded by premature failure during the relentless heat wave. High outside temperatures combined with stoop and go traffic on overheated pavement can drive under-the-hood temperatures to more than 200 degrees. Factor in extra heavy, parasitic electrical loads such as air conditioners, power windows and stereo systems, and the dog days of summer can be deadly for a car battery.

“Drivers can make their lives a lot easier during the summer by making sure their car battery is fully charged and the engine is in good shape” says Mr. Dever. “Start by having a load check on the battery. This type of test can be performed quickly by most automotive service centers. If the power is marginal, be on the safe side and get a new battery. A heat wave isn’t the time to economize and hope for a few more weeks of battery life.”

When buying a battery, power is the principal consideration. Automotive batteries are ranked by two factors, starting power, called “cold cranking amps” (CCAs), which indicate the power available to start the engine, and reserve capacity (RC), the number of minutes the battery will operate the essential accessories if the alternator fails.

According to the experts at Exide, the more electrical devices in the car, such as power windows, sun roofs and audio systems, the more power the battery should have. If the car will be exposed to extreme weather, either heat or cold, the best guarantee against failure is a battery with a high level of cold cranking amps, at least 550, depending on the vehicle’s engine type.

Several tips for good auto and battery maintenance during hot weather include:

- Keep the car engine in good condition. Tune up and change the oil regularly. In hot weather, use higher viscosity oil such as 10W40.
- Watch for terminal corrosion on the battery and make sure the battery cables are tight.
- Ideally, park the car in a shady spot during the day and in a garage at night, protecting the battery from damaging heat.
- Periodically check the radiator fluids to keep the engine from overheating.

For more information on battery care, please visit www.exide.com