

# Hibernation Time

## ***12 easy steps to prepare your Pontiac for winter storage***

Text and photography by Jim Black

Well it's that time of year again and unless you live in southern California, Florida or south Texas, etc; you'll soon be preparing your classic for winter storage.

Here in the Midwest, this usually means tucking the car away for about six months, from October through March, or longer, depending on weather trends.

Got a place to store your ride? Great.

For those of you who are seeking a safe hibernation hole, the ideal solution is to store it away from other cars that are driven on a daily basis. Logically, you probably don't want your fully restored collector vehicle parked next to the wife's minivan, where it can be subjected to door dings, used as temporary storage for boxes or groceries, as well as a perch for those pesky cats who love to hang out in the garage.

Besides man - and feline-caused trouble, storing your muscle in your house's attached garage still exposes it to the elements each time the door opens and closes. The best bet is an isolated, cool and dry environment with a concrete floor. Make sure it's free of mice, birds, cats, and other critters that could really take a toll on a stored vehicle - particularly since you're not likely to check on it every day. A separate garage or storage rental facility is the way to go and some can be rented on a month to month basis rather than a long-term lease.

If you take part in this annual winter ritual, hopefully you'll do more than just "park and forget" your pride and joy. For those of us who have owned a classic for years, we've probably settled into a comfortable method of preparation we rarely deviate from.

Still, we can probably do more to strike a balance in the procedure without going overboard. Follow along as we go over 12 essential steps to proper winter storage. The subject of our would-be hibernator is a '67 Lemans and here are the materials used:

### **Materials List:**

Car care products

Buffer/polisher  
vacuum cleaner  
Silicone grease  
Sta-Bil Fuel Stabilizer  
Oil & Filter  
Antifreeze/tester  
Tire Gauge  
Floor Jack  
Jack Stands(4)  
Battery Charger  
Car Cover

Lead - Covering car



Subject 1 & 2 - Our subject car is a 1967 Pontiac Lemans restored in 1995.  
Proper storage procedures will extend the life and looks of your car. Do it right!





Step 1 - Completely wash the exterior of the car to remove any road grime and surface dirt. Use car shampoo and *not* dish washing liquid which will strip wax.



Step 2 - Apply a fresh new coat of wax and buff for additional protection. Applying the wax by hand also is fine. The new wax coat will help prevent chaffing of the paint while under a car cover, thereby helping to prolong your car's finish.



Step 3 - Vacuum the interior, clean the upholstery, and apply a vinyl protector to seats, door panels, and dash pad. Protect any real wood trim pieces with a quality furniture wax.





Step 4 - Apply a thin coat of silicone grease to all rubber weather stripping. The silicone will keep the weather strips from drying out and also prevent sticking and pulling of paint at adjacent surfaces in the spring.



Step 5a - Stored fuel can begin to break down in less than 60 days causing varnish deposits in engines and starting problems in the spring. When topping off the gas tank (which will reduce condensation), treat with Sta-Bil fuel stabilizer. An 8-ounce bottle of Sta-Bil will treat up to 20 gallons of fuel.





Step 5b - We used a common syringe to add the fuel stabilizer to the rear license plate location. Start the engine and let it run so that the fuel stabilizer can work its way through the entire fuel system.



Step 6 - After the engine has warmed to normal operating temperature, shut it off and drain the crankcase, replace the oil filter, and refill with fresh oil. We used Valvoline Max Life on this Lemans, because it's formulated for higher mileage engines. Use of a quality engine flush like "Mac's" also will help dissolve sludge and help free the engine of contaminants. *Always* change the oil before placing a car in storage.



Step 7a - With an antifreeze tester check the cooling system and replace or add antifreeze if required. If you anticipate freezing temperatures in your area, make certain the car is protected to those temperatures.





Step 7b - Almost all auto parts stores now have 50/50 premixed coolant. Start and run the engine one last time so all added fluids can circulate fully, and turn on the air conditioning (if equipped) to lubricate the compressor's seals.



Step 8 - Check tire pressure and inflate to recommended cold temperature pressure.



Step 9 - Move the car into position to be stored and place the car in gear (manual transmission) or park (automatic) and turn off the engine. Carefully jack up the car until the tires clear the floor, and then place the vehicle on jack stands or blocks. Having the weight off the tires will prevent "flat spotting" and increase tire life.





Step 10 - Disconnect the battery (negative terminal first) and carefully remove from the car - store in a cool dry place. Removing the battery from the car will extend the battery life and make it easier to maintain a charge.



Step 11 - Never store a battery directly on concrete which will cause the battery to discharge over time. Setting it on wood blocks or a lower shelf is a good alternative. The use of a small battery charger, such as Deltran's Battery Tender Plus, can maintain the battery's charge during storage automatically.



Step 12 - Now all that's left to do is to remove the antenna mast and install the car cover. Shake the cover outdoors first, to blow out any dust or dirt particles. From here, it's just six months to go until spring.



**Sources:**

Gold Eagle Co.  
4400 S. Kildare  
Chicago, IL 60632  
1-800-367-3245  
[www.goldeagle.com](http://www.goldeagle.com)

Deltran Corporation  
801 International Speedway Blvd.  
DeLand, FL 32724  
(386) 736-7900  
[www.batterytender.com](http://www.batterytender.com)



The Valvoline Company  
Division of Ashland Inc.  
Lexington, KY 40509  
1-800-832-6825  
[www.valvoline.com/maxlife](http://www.valvoline.com/maxlife)