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## **WHAT YOU CAN'T SEE CAN DAMAGE YOUR CAR THIS WINTER**

CHICAGO - Oct. 15, 2006 - For car owners, spring and summer are the most popular seasons to wash and wax their cars. But for their cars, winter is the best season - especially in cold climates when dirt, corrosive road salts and melting snow can do a lot to destroy automobiles.

The International Carwash Association (ICA), a not-for-profit trade association committed to educating the motoring public on vehicle maintenance, says that motorists wash their car less in the winter months than in summer. Yet cars require more washes in cooler months - and when that doesn't happen, the resulting damage often goes unnoticed until it's too late for a cheap fix.

"By far, salt is the biggest car culprit - it can attack even the toughest paints and finishes if not washed off consistently," explains Mark Thorsby, executive director of the International Carwash Association. "Nearly \$24 billion a year is spent battling automobile corrosion damage. This winter, getting your car washed at least once or twice a month - or more if you see or feel build-up - is essential to protect your investment."

### **Drivers should be wary of the following car culprits this winter:**

- **SALT.** Most icy roads are treated with a corrosive mixture of sand and salt often in the form of sodium chloride. In recent years, another corrosive salt mixture - sodium magnesium - has been used on roads, which some experts say is even more corrosive. Some state transportation departments have even stopped using it due to its harsh impact on cars. Whichever mixture is used, salt caked on the undercarriage can promote rust, especially in older vehicles. It can also affect how well the car drives.
- **ACID RAIN.** According to studies compiled by ICA, it is critical to wash a vehicle immediately after a rainfall. As rain falls, it collects pollutants from the air, a concept commonly referred to as acid rain and triggered in North America by industrial and automotive pollution. The water eventually evaporates leaving a thin film of pollutants that can damage a car's finish permanently.
- **ENVIRONMENT ELEMENTS.** Bird droppings, road grime and tree sap can also mar a car's shiny finish, leaving it dulled and imperfect looking.

### **Car owners and drivers should take the following actions this winter:**

- Be a step ahead of winter. Visit a professional car wash at least once or twice a month - or more, depending on local weather conditions.
- Details, details. Professional detail services can restore a car to showroom quality, or very close to it. The ICA recommends detailing services at least once a year - or twice, if an ultra-clean look is desired year-round. A good time of year to get a detail is in spring, to remove the winter road grime from a car's interior and exterior - but anytime is better than not at all.

Know the facts about car washing:

- Car washes protect an owner's investment. Maintenance goes beyond oil changes and tune-ups. Keeping a car clean is essential - and not just for cosmetic reasons. If a vehicle isn't kept clean on a regular basis, it will be de-valued at the time of trade-in or resale. According to auto trade-in experts such as Kelley Blue Book, cars in excellent mechanical condition and appearance can be valued as much as \$1,500 higher than those in good or fair condition.
- Professional car washing is the wiser environmental choice. Pro washes use about 50 percent less water than at-home washes, thanks to conservation methods. Furthermore, professional car washes are mandated to pipe dirty water to treatment facilities or into state-approved drainage facilities. Quite the opposite, at-home car washes pollute the environment as soap and road grime (oil, tar, dirt) end up in storm sewers that flow into lakes, streams and rivers.
- Professional car washing saves time. A pro wash requires five-to-eight minutes, on average, compared to 45 to 60 minutes when done at home.
- Professional washes are cost-effective. Costs for car washes at a gas station every other week costs less than \$150 a year. Bi-weekly full-service car washes, costs just a few hundred dollars per year.

#### About the International Carwash Association

The International Carwash Association is a non-profit trade association serving 3,000 businesses in the United States, Canada and overseas. Membership includes car wash operators, equipment manufacturers, distributors, and related suppliers. International Carwash Association members represent approximately 25,000 car wash and car care locations in North America. To learn more about The International Carwash Association, membership benefits or Car Care World Expo, visit [www.CarCareCentral.com](http://www.CarCareCentral.com).

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