Press Release

Release Nr: 2011-05

November 27, 2020

Fort Drum Public Affairs

Fort Drum Auto Skills Center assists community members with winter car care

FORT DRUM, N.Y. (Nov. 27, 2020) – With winter approaching, people have enough to worry without the added stress of a vehicle breakdown and costly repairs.

Mike Graveline, Fort Drum Auto Skills Center manager, said that winterizing a vehicle now is the best way to avoid future aggravation.

“We have a lot of people who are new to the area, and they aren’t used to the extreme cold and what it can do to their cars,” Graveline said. “So we tell them that if you do these simple things, and do it now, it makes things less complicated later on.”

During an open house Nov. 21, Graveline demonstrated a vehicle inspection that included checking tire treads, wiper blades, battery, air filters and brakes.

“When you’re under the hood, look for cracks in any of the hoses,” he said. “Walk around your car and look for visible leaks. That’s a sure sign you’re going to have problems down the road.”

Graveline recommended replacing the windshield wiper fluid with a winter mix designed for low temperatures.

“Just make sure that you empty out the old fluid first, because if you mix the two it will leave streaks on the windshield,” he said.

Graveline also advised washing the car regularly, especially underneath the chassis, to remove any salts or chemicals that are used to treat roads during the winter.

Sgt. 1st Class Santos Valentin, with 277th Aviation Support Battalion, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, said that he appreciated all of these tips.

“I’m from Massachusetts and I’ve been stationed in Alaska and Colorado, so I know winter weather,” he said. “But sometimes you just overlook things, so I wanted to make sure I had all the information I need. For me, this is about protecting my car and my family.”

The Auto Skills Center staff also conducted a demonstration on brakes and front-end alignment during the open house.

“We wanted to show that these are some of the things you can do yourself, and you can save a ton of money here,” Graveline said. “We have a lot of people who are afraid to do it themselves, but we tell them, ‘Don’t be afraid. We’ll keep you in the right direction.’”

The Auto Skills Center offers equipment and tools, work bays, vehicle lifts, paint booth, auto body bays, welding equipment, a machine shop, wheel balancing and changing equipment, engine overhaul bay, lubrication bays, computer diagnosis, and electrical system testing for all DoD ID card holders. Other services include towing, state inspections, battery diagnostics and propane tank filling.

Graveline said that technicians are available to share their expertise with customers, but they also have a “Rent-A-Technician” option at an hourly rate.

“We can either show you how to do the work, or do it for you,” he said. “You can pretty much do everything here from an oil change to a transmission replacement.”

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Auto Skills Center is operating on an appointment-only basis to limit the number of people inside. First-time customers are required to watch an orientation safety video and learn how to operate the lift.

The Auto Skills Center is located at Bldg. 11120, Iraqi Freedom Drive. For a complete list of services, visit https://drum.armymwr.com/programs/automotive-skills-center.

To register for an orientation or schedule an appointment, call (315) 772-7902.

###

Media with inquiries regarding this press release should contact Fort Drum Public Affairs, Valerie Schneider, Valerie.m.schneider2.civ@mail.mil, 315-783-5828.

Caption #1: The Fort Drum Auto Skills Center offers equipment and tools, work bays, vehicle lifts, paint booth, auto body bays, welding equipment, a machine shop, wheel balancing and changing equipment, engine overhaul bay, lubrication bays, computer diagnosis, and electrical system testing for all DoD ID card holders. Other services include towing, state inspections, battery diagnostics and propane tank filling. (Photo by Mike Strasser, Fort Drum Garrison Public Affairs)

Caption #2: Mike Graveline, Fort Drum Auto Skills Center manager, demonstrates a vehicle inspection with Sgt. 1st Class Santos Valentin, 277th Aviation Support Battalion, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, during a winterization class Nov. 21. (Photo by Mike Strasser, Fort Drum Garrison Public Affairs)