



News Release

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RECORD-BREAKING HOLIDAY TRAVEL

Over 7.4 Million Mountain West to Travel—Highest Numbers on Record, Says AAA

SALT LAKE CITY, December 18, 2014 – The holiday season is truly lighting up this year as the Mountain West region is expecting to see its highest number of travelers ever seen for the end-of-the-year holiday season, according to the latest travel survey from AAA Utah.

AAA predicts more than 7.4 million Mountain West residents are expected to travel, during this end-of-the-year holiday season, representing an overall increase of 3.2 percent compared to 2013.

“Consumer optimism, an increase of disposable income, and lower gas prices are enabling many families to plan a holiday getaway,” said AAA Utah spokesperson Rolayne Fairclough. “This year the holidays land on a Thursday, creating a holiday travel season that is one day longer than a year ago and the longest since 2008. This makes travel scheduling for the period between Christmas and New Year’s more flexible.”

AAA estimates approximately 6.6 million Mountain West residents traveling during Christmas and New Year’s will choose to drive to their holiday destinations, representing a 3.4 percent increase compared to last year. The air travel industry will experience an increase this year as more than 530,000 Mountain West residents are expected to fly, a slight increase of 0.5 percent compared to 2013. More than 254,000 state residents are expected to travel by other modes of transportation, such as boats or trains. This represents an increase of 4.1 percent compared to last year.

Nationally, AAA projects more than 98 million people will travel 50 miles or more during the holiday festivities. That’s a 4 percent increase compared to last year.

AAA Three Diamond lodgings are expected to increase in price by 4 percent, costing an average \$143 per night, while AAA Two Diamond lodgings are expected to fetch an average of \$108, a 5 percent increase from last year. Weekend car rental rates will average \$63 per rental, compared to \$55 from last year.

For those Mountain West residents who take to the skies during this holiday season, they can expect to pay an average price of \$186 per round trip ticket for the top U.S. air routes. This represents a decrease of -7 percent from last year. This is influenced by the availability of discounted rates from low-cost carriers in several top markets.

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Between December 23 and January 4, AAA expects to come to the rescue of more than 1.1 million motorists with the primary reasons for breakdowns being dead batteries, flat tires and lockouts. AAA recommends motorists check battery and tire condition and prepare vehicles for winter driving before heading out on a holiday getaway.

Battery and Charging System – Have the battery and charging system tested by a trained technician. A fully charged battery in good condition is required to start an engine in cold weather. AAA members can request a visit from a AAA Mobile Battery Service technician who will test their battery and replace it on-site, if necessary. AAA Approved Auto Repair and AAA Car Care Plus® shops can also test and replace weak batteries.

- **Battery Cables and Terminals** – Make sure the battery terminals and cable ends are free from corrosion and connections are tight.
- **Drive Belts** – Inspect the underside of accessory drive belts for cracks or fraying. Many newer multi-rib “serpentine” belts are made of materials that do not show obvious signs of wear; replace these belts at 60,000-mile intervals.
- **Engine Hoses** – Inspect cooling system hoses for leaks, cracks or loose clamps. Also, squeeze the hoses and replace any that are brittle or feel excessively “spongy.”
- **Tire Type and Tread** – In areas with heavy winter weather, installing snow tires on all four wheels will provide the best winter traction. All-season tires work well in light-to -moderate snow conditions provided they have adequate tread depth. Replace any tire that has less than 3/32 inches of tread. Uneven tire wear can indicate problems with alignment, wheel balance or suspension— all of which must be addressed to prevent further tire damage.
- **Tire Pressure** – Check tire inflation pressure on all four tires and the spare more frequently in fall and winter. As the average temperature drops, so will tire pressures – typically by one PSI for every 10 degrees Fahrenheit. The proper tire pressure levels can be found in the owner’s manual or on a sticker often located on the driver’s side door.

AAA projections are based on research conducted by IHS Global Insight. The Boston-based economic research and consulting firm teamed with AAA earlier this year as part of an agreement to jointly analyze travel trends during the major holidays. AAA has been reporting on holiday travel trends for more than two decades.

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AAA Utah offers a wide array of automotive, travel, insurance, DMV, financial services, and consumer discounts to more than 183,000 million members. AAA has been a leader and advocate for the safety and security of all travelers since it was founded more than 100 years ago.