



Tire Maintenance An Important Safety Precaution

Tires are the link between a vehicle and the roadway, and tire quality has a direct impact on the performance and safety of an automobile. But tire maintenance is easy to overlook. However, ignoring tire maintenance can threaten driver and passenger safety and make a vehicle operate inefficiently.

Steering, breaking ability and traction are all governed by good tires. Worn tread can result in longer stopping times and make it difficult to brake immediately in an emergency situation. Although driving tends to be the primary culprit behind worn down tires, sometimes bald or unevenly worn out tread is indicative of a larger problem, such as a misaligned wheelbase, improp-

erly aligned tires or tires that are underinflated. The following are some common problems associated with tires and how to address these issues should they arise.

Blowouts

Worn tire treads increase the risk of punctures, which can lead to blowouts. Bald tires also may blowout as a result of friction on roadways that is met with minimal rubber. Getting caught on the side of the road with a tire blowout can be a hassle, so routinely check tire treads and replace tires accordingly.



Tread depth

Average new tires on cars usually start with 10/32 inch to 11/32 inch of original tread depth. When tread reaches a depth of 2/32 inch, they are considered worn out. There are different ways to gauge tread depth. Insert a penny into the tread groove with Lincoln's head upside down and facing you. If you

can see all of Lincoln's head, it is time to replace the tires. Another coin test is to insert a quarter into the groove. If the tread touches Washington's head, you have at least 4/32 inch of tread left. Don't have any currency on hand?

Then look at the treadwear indicator bar molded into the tires. When these bars become flush with the adjacent ribs of the tire, the tires should be replaced.

Alignment

According to the Rubber Manufacturers Association, improper alignment causes

rapid or uneven treadwear. Tires should be aligned and balanced periodically to avoid irregular wear and having to replace tires prematurely.

Tread pattern

Tires feature different tread patterns depending on the brand of tire. They may be directional, asymmetrical, nondirectional, and directional/asymmetrical. When purchasing replacement tires, it is advisable to match the tread pattern to the existing tires. This helps enhance the performance of the car. In fact, some newer cars require tread to match. Mismatched treads may cause problems with transmission shifting or impact control and steadiness.

Tire pressure

Underinflation of tires can cause failure, stress and irregular wear. Underinflated tires also may contribute to loss of control that leads to accidents. Always maintain the manufacturer's recommendations for the correct pressure, which should be adjusted based on the temperature.

Tires should undergo the same inspection and maintenance as other parts of the vehicle. Tires are a vital component to safe driving, and routine maintenance can prevent accidents and other problems.

Protect Vehicles In Hot Conditions

Dramatic fluctuations in temperature can wreak havoc on automobiles. While cars and trucks are designed to be reliable under various conditions, sometimes the weather can get the best of even the most reliable vehicle.

Many people associate car troubles with cold weather. However, cars are susceptible to breakdowns when it is hot outside. Extreme heat adds to an already high temperature under the hood, requiring ventilation and cooling systems to work that much harder. Batteries, alternators, starters, fan motors, and cooling systems are particularly vulnerable to high heat. It's easy for a car to overheat and breakdown. Proper maintenance and some hot weather guidelines can keep drivers safe and on the road when temperatures soar, whether drivers are going on a quick ride or an extended road trip.

*Be sure the radiator is working properly and is filled with fluid at all times. This helps prevent overheating, which can strand a vehicle on the side of the road.

*Hot temperatures cause items to expand, such as the air molecules inside of the tires. Make sure the tires are properly inflated so blowouts do not occur.

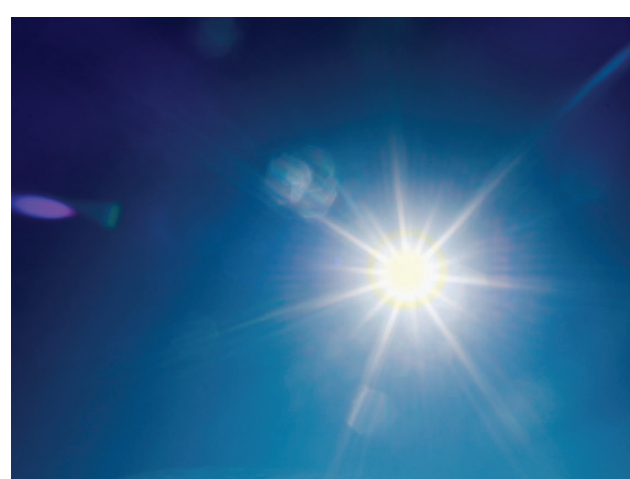
*Keep up-to-date with oil changes and other routine maintenance. Vehicles that are well maintained are less likely to be susceptible to heat strain.

*Proper air flow is essential to cool an engine and keep a vehicle air conditioning system operating efficiently. If the cooling system has not recently been serviced, have it done before the hot weather arrives.

*Replace an old battery, and top off a functioning battery with distilled water when necessary, particularly if evaporation has occurred.

*Clean the vehicle so that it will better reflect the sun's rays, cutting down on radiant heat.

*When the vehicle is parked, use a car cover or a



reflective shade in the windshield to protect the interior from sun damage and excessive heat.

*Tinted windows can help block out more of the sun's ultraviolet rays. Make sure that tint is legal and applied properly if it is done after-market.

*Plan road trips for early

in the morning or late at night to cut down on the amount of time spent driving during the peak heat and sunshine.

*Passengers should wear appropriate clothing and apply sunscreen. Car windows do not block UV light, and passengers may be susceptible to sunburn even

when they're in the car.

*Park in the shade whenever possible.

*Never leave children or pets unattended in a vehicle, even for short moments.

*If the temperature gauge inside of the car reads hot, pull over, open the hood and turn the heat on inside the car to expel some of the pent-up heat.

*Keep plenty of water on hand in the event of a breakdown to prevent dehydration until help arrives.

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