



TIRE WEAR

The condition of your tires is one of the most important mechanical factors in vehicle safety. There are four ways you can improve the safety and performance of your tires.

1. KEEP TIRES PROPERLY INFLATED

Check them at least monthly to notice if tire pressure appears to be getting low. Incorrect tire pressure can cause uneven tire wear, poor handling, excessive heat build up, and possible tire failure. Check your vehicle manual for recommended tire pressures. If you have new tires installed, check their pressure. Recommended tire pressures can vary depending on the brand of tire. When you check tire pressure, do so first thing in the morning for an accurate reading. Driving the vehicle heats up the tires and changes their pressure.

2. ROTATE TIRES TO INCREASE LIFE

Follow the rotation schedule in your vehicle's owner's manual.

3. KEEP TIRES BALANCED AND ALIGNED

Improperly balanced tires can produce an uneven ride that can result in poor handling. Defective alignment can cause excessive tire wear and the vehicle to pull to the side.

4. REPLACE TIRES WHEN THE TREAD GETS TOO LOW

What is too low? All tires have "treadwear indicators" built right into them. These indicators are molded into the bottom of the tread grooves and will appear as "bands" when the tread depth reduces to the size of 1/16th of an inch. When the indicators appear in two or more adjacent grooves, the tire should be replaced. Look in your vehicle's manual for more information. Usually the manual will have a picture showing what the tread wear indicators look like. Look at your tires on a regular basis. Have a professional check them further if you have any doubts about their safety.

REPAIRING VS REPLACING TIRES

Not every flat or damaged tire can be fixed. Sometimes, you just need to replace a flat or damaged tire. However, there are other instances when you can get the tire—and your entire car—back on the road with a quick tire repair.

- If you've got a tire that's been punctured by a nail or another object, the tire can be fixed, but only as long as the puncture is in the tread area and doesn't measure more than 1/4 of an inch in diameter.
- If the puncture is in the sidewall or shoulder of the tire, you've got to get a new one. Safety first!
- If there's more than one puncture, you likely can get the tire repaired if the punctures are at least 16 inches apart. Otherwise, it's time to buy a new tire.
- If the tire has sustained serious damage in a crash, such as big cuts or tread separation, it should be replaced, not repaired.

TEMPTING TIRE NO-NOS

You might be tempted to do a quick fix when you do have a flat or damaged tire. Here are two that can be used in emergency or short-term situations, but shouldn't be considered long-term tire repairs:

Sealants or emergency inflators: These fast fixes are a mixed blessing. They'll help you get your vehicle to a local repair shop, but don't count on them to keep you on the road for very long. Tire sealants can freeze in cold weather, damage your tire pressure monitoring system, and prove ineffective at repairing any tire damage that's more serious than a slow leak or small hole.

Plug or patch: Again, these are quick fixes that aren't meant to enable long-term use of a punctured or damaged tire. A plug doesn't offer a permanent seal, while a patch doesn't fully cover the hole left by a nail or another object that caused a puncture. Patching alone is never an adequate fix.



ToolBox TALKS

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