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Tactical Responses

Tire Safety

By Gary G. Miller

The Next Level In Driver
Training

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FLAT TIRE?

.....2 out of every 10 drivers have experienced tire failure (most notably flat tires) while operating their personal or company vehicle.....

**Be Prepared. It
Can Happen To You!**

Tire Safety

Tires, brakes, an accelerator pedal, and a steering wheel pretty much dictate the control we have on our vehicle. This article will focus on tires.

Not all tires are created equal, but yet most of the tires that everyday drivers use essentially are. I know, I have already contradicted myself and I am only on my fourth sentence. Let me see if we can clear this up.

Almost all tires on passenger vehicles are pneumatic (air-filled) and made from rubber compounds. They are primarily designed to increase roadway adhesion, channel water, provide a comfortable ride, and last a reasonable amount of time. The trick is to increase roadway adhesion without increasing tire wear; to channel water on wet days, yet provide good adhesion on dry days; and to provide reasonable traction on snowy and icy roads without increasing road noise on fair weather days. Tire engineering is not an easy task and occasionally they have serious flaws. Unfortunately, most of the time we do not know of them until it is too late. Consider the recent incidences of where tread and valve failures have occurred. One well known brand suffered problems based on inflation pressure, heat buildup, and bonding failures, that when coupled with driver over corrections contributed to numerous cases of injury and death. History has shown us that drivers must always be prepared to encounter a tire failure for a variety of reasons.

In virtually every class the Tactical Response Academy teaches 2 out of every 10 drivers have experienced tire failure (most notably flat tires) while operating their personal or company vehicles. It happens. Be prepared. Remember two hands on the wheel. Very slight braking while avoiding the tendency to overcorrect the steering. Simply visualizing these rules now, can keep you in control of your vehicle when it happens to you.

Tread design and depth have always been important in adverse weather driving performance, yet there has been little information available to conclusively demonstrate enhanced dry weather performance. A study conducted by the Forensic Accident Reconstructionists of Oregon in 1997 demonstrated that 12 varying sets of tires were tested in full lockup. All registered similar drag values (+/- 5%) with the exception of one tire, irregardless of their tire ratings or costs. After investigating the bad tire, the manufacturer acknowledged a problem with that batch of tires. A new set of tires were tested and found to be within the 5% variation pattern.

With the advent of antilock braking systems (ABS), tire performance can now be confused with ABS braking performance. Bottom line is that with more variables it becomes more difficult for scientists and non-scientists alike to determine actual problems before they become the report of a technical service bulleting or a safety recall. Often this is years after the fact.



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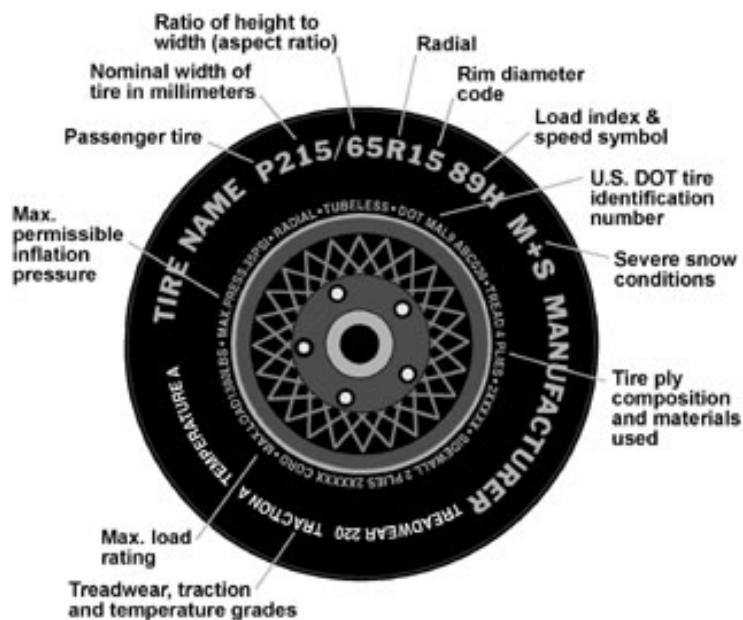
*Low tire pressure is
not only dangerous, it
increases gas
consumption.*

Tire Safety (Continued)

Consumer Reports magazine devotes a couple of articles every year to tire performance and value. Their testing is scientific based and most of the time very reliable. Some testing such as their testing of nitrogen gas in tires, is so laboratory confined that it does not factor in all the potential variables to really answer the question with any great detail. The latest research suggests that nitrogen air-loss with normal usage is less than compressed air and that there is considerably less condensation/moisture in the tire. Are the losses significant or are they tied to something else? That is the question of which is currently being tested. **Mostly** everyone is in agreement that **it** makes sense to use nitrogen in tires for large fleets. Currently, there are few retail outlets that have nitrogen gas available, which limits its usage. Costco Stores are a major chain that uses nitrogen gas in their tires.

A few other points of interest on tire safety:

- ◇ Low tire pressure is not only dangerous, it increases gas consumption. Prior to getting in your vehicle, walk completely around your vehicle and visually make sure your tires are adequately inflated. Also, remember to check your tires with a gauge at least once a month. The worse **time** to discover you have a flat tire is while driving.
- ◇ An accelerating tire that spins on ice has essentially the same lateral traction as a locked tire on ice—very little. Commercial vehicles will often jackknife going up a grade for this very reason. If their drive axle tires spin and they are on a grade, the drive axle will spin out and the vehicle will jackknife.
- ◇ Know how to read the age of a tire. A 2007 National Highway Transportation and Safety Administration (NHTSA) study found that a tire over 6 years old is subject to enough deterioration from just age alone, that they should not be used. Yet, there are dealers out there who may sell them as new, because they have never been used. Look for the DOT# and focus on the last four digits. That number will indicate the week and year the tire was made. For example 5007 would indicate the tire was made in the 50th week of 2007. If the tire is over a year old look for another choice.





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..watch for shaded curves, bridges and/or overpasses that may still be icy, even though the sun is shining.....

Winter Driving Tips.....

by Gary G. Miller

It's that time of year again, when the weather and road conditions can change in a heartbeat.

TRA advises you to:

1) **Be Prepared**—Give yourself a little extra time each morning to scrape your windshield completely. Let the defrost clear the window before driving, not after you start.

2) **Keep your gas tank half full or more** - You never know when you will be in a major road blockage. It also reduces condensation.

3) **Keep winter safety supplies in the trunk** - Keep a shovel, some type of traction material, traction devices, a blanket, water and a few power bars in your trunk. You should also have a first aid kit, fuses, and a flashlight (check your batteries).

4) **Watch for ice even when you don't see it** - On cold days watch for shaded curves, bridges and/or overpasses that may still be icy even though the sun is shining and the rest of the roads have no ice on them. Often times as a driver enters a shaded curve they see the ice and hit the brakes sending them in the opposing lane or off the roadway. Brake and slow down prior to the curve.

5) **Keep your speed either at or below the speed limit or designated speed.** Remember that Oregon has the Violation of Basic Rule statute, which means that if conditions warrant driving less than the designated speed or speed limit then you must do so.

6) **Make sure that your exhaust system is in good condition** - Watch for exhaust coming out from other than the tailpipe on cold mornings. That is a clear indication that you have holes in your system. On a cold day in a traffic tie up with a faulty exhaust system you may increase your chance of carbon monoxide poisoning.

8) **Have your brakes checked.** - Brakes and brake fluid are very important safety features of your car. Often times people put off getting brakes checked or serviced.



9) **Avoid hydroplaning.** Generally speaking you only need about two-tenths of an inch of water to cause hydroplaning. Proper tire pressure and sufficient tread depth make hydroplaning less likely. Keeping your speed down also reduces your chances of hydroplaning.

10) **Wipe off your exterior lights and interior windows.**— This will increase your ability to see on dark nights and help reduce glare.

11) **Avoid using cruise control on wet or icy days.**—A spinning tire provides no traction. If you are using cruise control on road surfaces that are potentially more slippery than normal and are on a slight

incline, there is a chance that your transmission may automatically shift to a higher gear. If this happens and the surface is slippery enough, your drive train axle will spin. This spinning can cause control loss.

12) **Change your windshield wiper blades**—Fall is the ideal time to change blades. Summer heat hardens the old blades and makes them less effective. A fresh set of blades before the rains hit and darkness comes early just makes sense.

13) **Avoid medications/drugs/alcohol when driving.** - Even over the counter cold medicines can make you drowsy. Add to that rolling up the windows, turning on the heat, a little fatigue, and bad things are going to happen. Don't let them happen to you.

14) **Remember 4 wheel drive vehicles and all wheel drive vehicles brake the same as two wheel drive vehicles.** Many drivers feel overconfident when in 4 wheel drive and will go faster than they should. Remember use 4-wheel drive to get you out of trouble not into trouble.

15) **Never strongly apply your emergency brake on snowy or icy roads (roads with low friction coefficient values).** The rear axle will most likely become unstable and you will go into a spin and potentially lose control.

16) **Spinning tires cause the same problems as locked, sliding tires—you lose control.** Slowly accelerate on slippery roadways so that you will not break traction and lose control. This often times happens to truckers on upgrades when their driver tires spinout.



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Future Training Dates & Locations

TRA continues to provide on and off site driver training. Driver training using classrooms and the simulator will be situated at;

- Chemeketa Regional Training Center in Brooks, Oregon for the winter months.

If you are interested in setting up future training dates please contact us.

A special thank you to our newest clients:

- Winston-Dillard Rural Fire Department
- State of Oregon, Department Of Human Resources
- Portland Western Railroad
- Salem Electric
- Albina Headstart



Gary G. Miller, Editor

Look For Our Future Issues/Articles

Next Issue:
ABS Braking Systems

Tactical Responses is a quarterly public service newsletter that is freely available either by including yourself on the TRA email newsletter list or by reviewing it on the website www.tacticalresponseacademy.com.

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