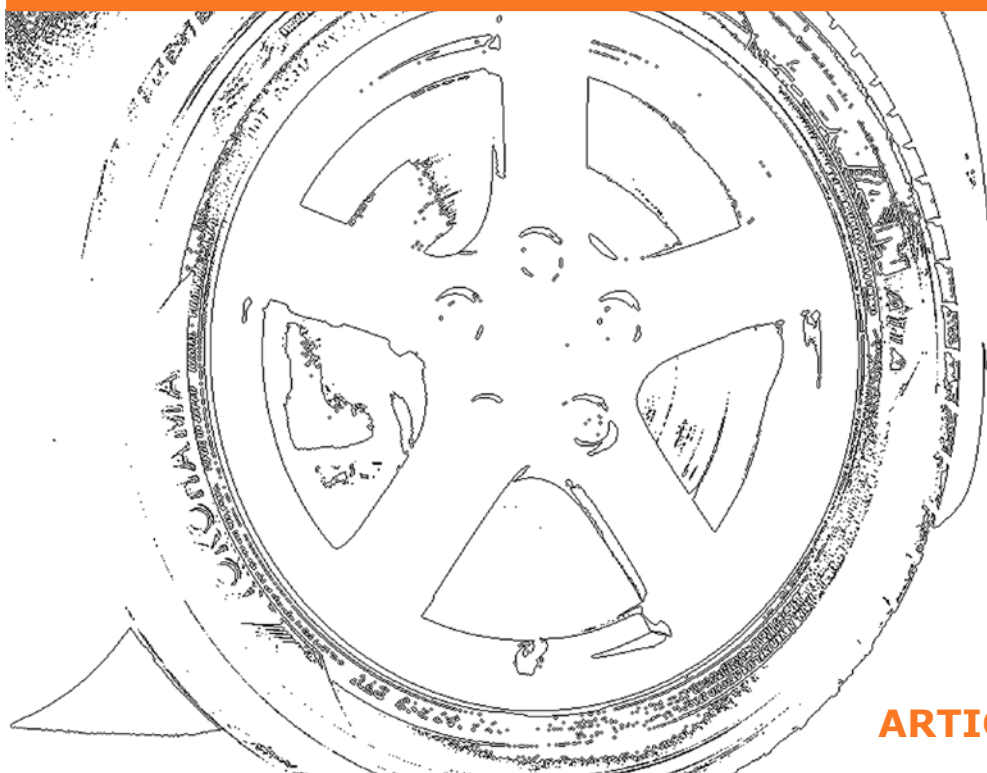


Knowledge

BANK



ARTICLE 36

A quick guide to tyre safety

A quick guide to tyre safety

The tyre for the job

We all want the highest level of grip, tread life, durability and comfort from our tyres. We want them to look reasonably good and be fairly quiet on the road. We want them to drive as well on the motorway as on minor roads, and just as well in summer as on winter ice and snow. And we don't want to pay too much for them either.

The bad news is that you cannot have all of these attributes in one tyre. Tyres represent a compromise, and manufacturers have to trade off one attribute against another when they design a tyre.

The manufacturer of your new car will have selected the tyres in consultation with the tyre manufacturer. The tyre they chose will represent the best option for the weight, style and power of your vehicle.

This is worthwhile bearing in mind when replacing tyres. It is best to replace a worn tyre with the same one as the manufacturer specified, even if it costs more. The expression 'You get what you pay for' applies here.

Tyre safety and the law

The legal minimum tyre tread depth for cars and similar vehicles throughout the European Union is 1.6mm across a continuous band comprising the central 75% of the breadth of tread and the entire circumference of the tyre. There must be no tears, deep cuts, lumps, bulges or separation of the components of the tyre and no part of the underlying cords or ply should be visible.

For safety reasons many leasing and fleet management companies replace tyres when the tread depth reaches 2mm.

Temporary-use 'run-flat' tyres can be used if the vehicle speed does not exceed 50mph. These tyres must be supplied with clear instructions for use and state clearly that they are for temporary use only. They must be a different colour to normal tyres.

Surveys have consistently shown that a high proportion of cars are

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driven with dangerously worn tyre tread.

Most car tyres have tread wear indicators set at 1.6mm. These are six or more small ribs that can be found across the bottom of the main tread grooves. The tyre must be replaced when the tread surface has worn down to the ribs.

The law on driving with defective tyres is quite harsh. For all vehicles (other than goods vehicles and vehicles adapted to carry more than eight passengers) every offence carries a fine at level 4 of the standard scale, with discretionary disqualification and three penalty points. The Level 4 fine is currently £2,500. Each faulty tyre is considered as a separate offence. Having four faulty tyres can involve fines of up to £10,000.

It is illegal in the United Kingdom to mix radial ply and cross ply tyres on the same axle or to have radial ply tyres on the front axle and cross ply tyres on the rear axle. The only exception is when spare tyres are used in an emergency.

Checking tyres

All tyres are worn down through normal use but you should check the pattern of wear to see if it reveals a cause that is not just mileage-related.

If the tyre is worn around the inner or outer edge, this can be caused by poor wheel alignment or suspension problems.

New tyres need to be balanced to ensure they are in correct alignment. Badly aligned tyres will cause tyres to wear more quickly than they should, which will lead to poor handling and vehicle vibration.

Tyres should always be inflated according to the manufacturer's recommendation. Inflation should be carried out when the tyres are cold as the pressure inside a tyre rises when it is hot. If the tyres are not inflated to the correct pressure the vehicle's handling, steering and braking will be affected, and this can easily lead to accidents.

All tyres have a series of codes on their sidewall, showing the maximum weight the tyre can carry, maximum speed, country of origin, size, type approval, etc.

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To take a fictitious example, let us assume your tyre shows the following codes:

Great Tyres BB3 265/60R17 93W DOT 5692HTYI E41236598 Made in the UK

- Great Tyres BB3 is the manufacturer and model name
- 265 is the width of the tyre in mm
- 60 is the ratio between the height and width
- R shows this is a radial tyre
- 17 is the diameter of the rim, in inches
- 93 reflects the load capacity of the tyre, according to an index
- W shows the speed rating of the tyre, according to this table:

TYRE SYMBOLS – side of tyre

SYMBOL GUIDE (NORMAL USE)		
SPEED SYMBOL	SPEED (kph)	SPEED (mph)
S	180	111.8
T	190	118.1
U	200	124.3
H	210	130.5
V	240	149.1
W	270	167.8
Y	300	186.4
VR*	210+	130+
ZR*	240+	150+
WINTER/REINFORCED		
Q	160	99.4
R	170	105.6
VAN		
N	140	87
P	150	93.2
TRUCK		
J	100	62.1
K	110	68.4
L	120	74.6
M	130	80.8

*Old designation

* DOT denotes the tyre is type-approved by the US Department of Transport.

* 5692HTYI is the manufacturer's batch number. E41236598 is the EU type approval number of the tyre.

* The country of manufacture is always shown.

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TyreSafe (formerly the Tyre Industry Council), is responsible for raising the awareness of the importance of the dangers of defective and worn tyres. It comprises representatives from rubber manufacturers, tyre importers and retread tyre manufacturers. It promotes awareness of tyre safety, arranges campaigns including roadside tyre checks with UK police forces and tyre safety clinics organised with road safety officers. Tyresafe can be contacted at 6 Bath Place, Rivington Street, London EC2A 3JE. www.tyresafe.org

Retreads and used tyres

In normal use the tread is the only part of a tyre to wear away. Tyresafe argues that it makes both economic and ecological sense to give a new lease of life to an otherwise good tyre by retreading it. All retread tyres supplied in the UK must meet the requirements of BS AU 144e, the British Standard for retreaded tyres, and must be marked with the Standard number. Certain foreign-made tyres may be supplied if they are of an equivalent standard.

The British Standard requires examination and inspection of retreaded tyres at all stages of production. Tyre debris, often seen at the side of motorways, does not necessarily come from retreaded tyres. Retreaded tyres are used extensively on aircraft and in motor racing.

There are many dangers in buying part-worn or 'second-hand' tyres. Their history is unknown; they may come from a vehicle involved in an accident or have been damaged by 'kerbing'. Repairs may not have been carried out properly, as required by British Standard BS AU 159e.

Regulations control the quality of part-worn tyres offered for sale. They have to have been properly examined internally and externally. Tread depth must be 2mm minimum across the whole breadth of tread and the tyres must be marked 'PART-WORN' adjacent to the 'e' or 'E BS' marking.

Disposal of tyres

For most fleets, tyre disposal is a simple matter: When you have a new tyre fitted the supplier disposes of the old one. You don't have to worry about what they do with the old one because that's their business, not yours.

Right?

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No, actually, that's wrong.

The EU Directive on Landfill has banned the burying of whole tyres from 2003 and will ban the burying of shredded tyres from 2006. And, crucially, you have to make sure that your tyre supplier takes this responsibility seriously. If they do not do so, you are responsible alongside them.

It is extremely unlikely that a large national tyre supplier will fail in its duty to dispose of tyres legally. But many fleets use small local companies to maintain their cars, and enjoy the low prices this can bring. If you have any doubts you should check your supplier is using a registered collection agent to dispose of your tyres legally.