



# Training notes from the woods & the classroom

September 2010

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## National Tire Safety Week June 6 - 12

*By Paul Schultz*

The ninth annual National Tire Safety Week will be held June 6-12, 2010. The annual event is an initiative of the Rubber Manufacturers Association (RMA) "Be Tire Smart - Play Your PART" program, a year-round effort designed to help drivers learn the simple steps they can take to ensure that their tires are in good working condition. RMA is the national trade association for tire manufacturers.

Now is a good time to review the benefits of conducting thorough tire inspections during daily pre and post trip inspections. With the price of diesel fuel now approaching \$3/gallon the benefits of good tire inspection not only pertains to safe vehicle operation but could also mean a sizable fuel savings. Tires are designed to run at a given load and inflation pressure. Running 18 tires 30% under inflated will cost you 5% in actual vehicle fuel economy, 10% under inflation will be a 1% penalty in fuel, and 20% under inflation will be over 2% loss in fuel economy.

Tire pressure should be checked daily with a calibrated gauge. The practice of striking a tire with an object is not recommended and is inaccurate in determining inflation pressure. If the tire is under inflated only bad things will result. Irregular wear will develop, fuel economy will get worse, retread ability will be reduced, and tires will not reach their target removal miles. Look for any signs of irregular wear which is an early warning sign for under inflation and/or vehicle alignment issues. The tire tread should be wearing smoothly. If not, a technician is needed to check out the vehicle. Drivers should rub their hand over the tire tread and sidewall looking for any signs of punctures or damage. Drivers have an enormous impact on maximizing tire mileage.

### **Is there a way I can tell the age of a tire?**

Each tire has a US DOT identification number. This number begins with the letters "DOT" and indicates that the tire meets all federal standards. The next two numbers or letters are the plant code where it was manufactured, and the last four numbers represent the week and year the tire was built. For example, the numbers 3109 means the 31<sup>st</sup> week of 2009. The other numbers are marketing codes used at the manufacturer's discretion. This information is used to contact consumers if a tire defect requires a recall.

### **When should a tire be placed out of service?**

FMCSA regulations appendix G addresses tire out of service conditions on commercial motor vehicle as follows:

**Any tire on any steering axle of a power unit:**

- (1) With less than 4/32" tread measured at any point on a major tread groove.
- (2) Has body ply or belt material exposed through the tread or sidewall.
- (3) Has any tread or sidewall separation.
- (4) Has a cut where the ply or belt material is exposed.
- (5) A tube-type radial tire without radial tube stems markings. These markings include a red band around the tube stem, the word "radial" embossed in metal stems, or the word "radial" molded in rubber stems.
- (6) Mixing bias and radial tires on the same axle.
- (7) Tire flap protrudes through valve slot in rim and touches stem.
- (8) Regrooved tire except motor vehicles used solely in urban or suburban service.
- (9) Boot, blowout, patch or other ply repair.
- (10) Weight carried exceeds tire load limit. This includes overloaded tire resulting from low air pressure.
- (11) Tire is flat or has noticeable leak.
- (12) So mounted or inflated that it comes in contact with any part of the vehicle.

**All tires other than those found on the steering axle of a power unit:**

- (1) With less than 2/32" tread measured at any point on a major tread groove.
- (2) Above items 2, 3, 4, 10, 11, 12.

**Facts at a Glance - Tires and Auto Safety**

- ✓ Number of tires on the road in America in 2007 on non-commercial vehicles (cars and light trucks, including SUVs): 960 million
- ✓ Number of light vehicles and commercial tires shipped in 2007: 310 million
- ✓ Vehicle miles traveled in 2007: 2.98 trillion
- ✓ Highway fatalities in 2005: 43,400
- ✓ Estimated annual number of highway fatalities caused by under inflated tires: 660
- ✓ Recommended frequency for visual inspection and inflation pressure check of all our tires and the spare: Once a month and before every long trip.

For more info go to [www.betiresmart.org/](http://www.betiresmart.org/)

Drive Safe!

*"Being defeated is often a temporary condition. Giving up is what makes it permanent."*  
- Marilyn vos Savan

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