Don’t be Tyresome! – Kim’s Tips

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Author: Kim Henson

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DON’T BE TYRESOME; STAY SAFE! says Kim.



The difference in the dynamic behaviour of a vehicle fitted with tyres in good condition and correctly inflated, compared with one on defective/worn out and probably under-inflated

tyres is, quite simply, amazing.

In order to be sure that the vehicle will respond as designed to the controls, to safely steer round a bend, brake, accelerate and so on, the tyres MUST be in sound condition and inflated to the recommended pressures.

This is not difficult to achieve, and for a total outlay of about £20 or less, any motorist can equip himself or herself with a foot pump, a tyre pressure gauge and tread depth gauge. Alternatively, for those who do not wish to carry out such checks themselves, any garage or tyre sales outlet should be able to check the tyres very quickly and easily.

The pressures should be checked very frequently (ideally once a week or so), or at the very least it's worth a walk round the car to see if one or more of the tyres LOOKS soft.

So why should motorists bother (and it's a sad fact that many don't)?

First, road safety – for the driver of the car, all its occupants and other road users anywhere near it. A car on worn tyres can slide out of control very rapidly, especially on wet or icy roads, and the distances required for the vehicle to be slowed or stopped also markedly increase.

Next, the law says so. If a tyre is substantially damaged, or if the tread depth is less than the prescribed minimum, the driver of the vehicle is liable to three penalty points on their driving licence plus a fine of up to £2,500 PER TYRE! So if a driver is caught in charge of a car with, say, four defective tyres, that could be him or her off the road AND a fine of up to £10,000…

So what IS the legal limit? The law states that the tread has to be a MINIMUM depth of 1.6mm, across the central three-quarters of the tread, and ALL AROUND the complete circumference of the tyre.

In fact it is highly recommended that the tyres should be renewed well before their tread

depths get worn down anywhere near to the 1.6mm limit. It is worth bearing in mind that in wet conditions a car travelling at 50 mph and having tyre tread depths of 1.6mm will require approximately two additional car lengths of road in which to stop, compared with tread depths of 3mm…

For optimum performance, the tyres also need to be inflated to the correct pressures, given in the vehicle's handbook (and in some cases the manufacturers advise that the tyre pressures should be increased for certain driving conditions, including, often, the carrying of a full load of people and luggage).

Apart from making the car feel better and enabling it to drive more safely on the road, having good tyres at the correct pressures will save money too, since the tyres will last longer and the vehicle's engine will consume less fuel.

When did you last check your tyres?

Kim Henson