

Importance of Proper Truck Tire Maintenance

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Tire selection with application and position in mind is particularly relevant today, as fleets are running heavier loads for longer hours of operation, according to Bridgestone.

Photo: Bridgestone

Tires are one of a fleet’s most important assets.

“A proactive tire maintenance program supports safety on the road and helps fleets capitalize on long-term performance. From Class 8 trucks to passenger vehicles, proactive tire maintenance helps fleets identify and address problems before they happen, potentially avoiding costly downtime while multiplying savings through optimized tire performance, including improved tread life and fuel economy,” explained Kyle Chen, brand manager, truck and bus radial tires, U.S. and Canada, Bridgestone Americas Tire Operations (BATO).

By managing a tire throughout its lifecycle – from selection to removal – fleet managers can make a big impact on the bottom line, all while making mobility more efficient for their fleet.

New eBook: How to Boost Your Urban Fleet Efficiency

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a surge in the demand for urban fleets. To help you maximize your efficiency while cutting costs, Michelin has created a free eBook that tackles the two biggest tire-related challenges that every urban fleet faces—and shows you how to overcome them.

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Tips for Tire Safety

Before they hit the road, every driver should conduct a pre-trip inspection to ensure there are no tire-related issues that need to be addressed before a haul.

“For example, visually inspecting tires for irregularities such as cuts or penetrations is a simple and effective pre-trip tire maintenance step that every fleet should perform,” Chen added.

Below are some other best practices that Bridgestone recommends fleets implement before, during, and after a haul to promote safer driving conditions and efficient operations:

1. **Select the right tire for the job.** Fleet managers should consider the proper tire size, load carrying capacity, and service type. According to Bridgestone, tire selection is the foundation of tire performance. Fleet managers should also consider additional factors when choosing a tire to make sure performance expectations are met, such as application, size, load carrying capacity, and route. Once a tire is selected, proactive maintenance, operations, and inspections are critical to ensure a tire's long-term safety and performance over time.
2. **Ensure and maintain proper cold inflation tire pressure.** Tire inflation pressure is a critical and often overlooked aspect of a tire maintenance program, according to Bridgestone. Improper tire inflation pressure can lead to downtime and damaged tire casings. Proper tire inflation pressure can help to ensure even weight distribution across a tire's contact patch, which can maximize treadwear life and fuel efficiency.

It is important to remember to check tire inflation pressure when a tire is cold. According to Bridgestone, cold inflation pressure is most accurately measured when tires have been parked for at least three hours or driven less than one mile at a moderate speed. Bridgestone also recommends fleet managers and commercial truck drivers use a calibrated tire pressure gauge at each wheel position.

3. **Inspect tires often.** Hands-on inspections are helpful to identify irregular wear issues, low tread depth, and road-related damage. Before each trip, fleet managers should ensure drivers look for such issues as irregular wear, flat spotting, cuts, cracks, bulges, or penetrations. Frequent, manual inspections will help drivers address any issues before they impact tire performance.
4. **Abide by a tire's recommended speed rating.** Fleet managers should always reinforce drivers abide by each tire's maximum speed rating, which may be lower than posted highway speed limits. By not exceeding the speed rating of a tire, drivers can help avoid various tire-related incidents that could potentially cause downtime or create additional road hazards for the motoring public.

Fleet managers and their drivers should always be on the same page when it comes to tire maintenance.

“Everyone benefits from proper tire maintenance practices. Training and education can help ensure that everyone behind the wheel and in the yard understands their role in a fleet's tire maintenance program. When everyone knows their role and what proactive maintenance steps to take, fleets are better prepared to avoid downtime and improve safety on the road,” Chen added.



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Debunking Tire Myths

Myths are abundant when it comes to tires. Misinformation is spread so much more quickly today than ever before, and it's essential to know the truth related to truck tires.

One myth is that all tires are created equal.

Truck Tire Replacement & Pricing Trending Upward

“Tires are highly specialized pieces of technology engineered for specific vehicles, equipment, and applications. With this specialization in mind, selecting the right tire for the application and use is critical to tire safety and performance. Fleet managers should consider the vehicle type, Gross Axle Weight Rating (GAWR), speed requirements, service conditions, and tire specifications such as size, load range, and intended application,” Chen said.

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Another myth is around retreading, or the practice of replacing the tread on a tire casing instead of removing the tire from service after one use.

“Retreading helps extend the useful life of a tire casing by replacing the tread two or more times, which, in turn, helps lower the total cost of ownership (TCO) per mile,” Chen said. “Many people still believe a common tire myth that retreads are of lesser quality than new tires and are a contributor to tire debris seen on highways. In reality, rubber debris most often is the result of human error and poor tire care such as underinflation, overloading, and tire abuse,” Chen said.

Today’s high-quality retreads can provide performance and reliability benefits for much less than purchasing another new tire.

“It is easy to see why many of the largest fleets in North America incorporate retreads in their tire programs. Again, safety and performance come back to tire care best practices, which are critical for both new and retread tires,” Chen said.

The Bottom Line

It can’t be said enough: Tires are one of a fleet’s most valuable assets.

“A proactive tire maintenance program encourages fleets to monitor their tires every day and address issues proactively before they impact operational efficiency, increase incremental operating costs, cause safety concerns, and unplanned downtime. A proactive tire maintenance program treats tires like the important asset that they are, and more importantly, supports the safety of a fleet, its operators, and other drivers on the road,” concluded Chen.

Related: [Understanding Truck Tires: Load Ratings, Sizes & More](#)