

Play it smart with tire pressure

The Edmonton Sun
Fri Oct 2 2009
Page: A20
Section: Autonet
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When measuring tire inflation, a gaze is no substitute for a gauge

Measuring and maintaining correct tire inflation with a tire gauge is a road safety essential.

Under-inflation is the most common cause of tire failure and can lead to poor or delayed braking, steering or acceleration -- not surprising when you consider that the air contained in tires supports about 95% of a vehicle's weight.

Beyond obeying the speed limit and driving defensively, motorists can protect themselves and their families by measuring their tires' inflation levels monthly to ensure they are always inflated to the vehicle manufacturer's recommendation.

According to research by the the Rubber Association of Canada, nearly one quarter of Canadian drivers have at least one tire that is severely under-inflated by more than 20%, and nearly 70% drive on one or more tires that are under-inflated by more than 10%.



Improperly inflated tires also wear faster and use more fuel due to increased rolling resistance. Research by Natural Resources Canada, for example, has found that the average Canadian motorist wastes about two weeks' worth of fuel a year due to tire under-inflation.

Here is the monthly four-step approach to proper tire inflation recommended by tire makers as part of the industry's **Be Tire Smart** campaign to advance road safety, environmental protection and fuel economy:

- Find the recommended inflation pressure for your tires. It will be listed on the vehicle placard most commonly located on the inside post of one of the doors, in the glove compartment or on the fuel door. If you cannot find your vehicle's placard, consult your owner's manual.
- Remember to only measure pressure when your tires are cold. If you have been driving, wait three hours before measuring tire pressure.
- Use only a reliable tire gauge. Remove the cap from the valve stem, press the tire gauge onto the valve and take the pressure reading.
- Add air until the recommended air pressure is achieved. If you overfill the tire, release air by pushing on the metal stem in the centre of the valve, then re-measure the pressure.

Too many drivers think a visual check will tell them if their tire pressures are correct. A tire can be under-inflated by 20% or more and not look noticeably different. The only accurate way to measure a tire's air pressure is with a reliable gauge, which can be purchased for a few dollars.

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Tone: Positive 
Ad Value: \$1,412.26 
Circulation: 70,208 