

Proper tire inflation increases dramatically since 2003: Survey

Slightly less than half of Canadian motorists continue to drive with at least one tire under- or over inflated.

Toronto, May 18, 2010 – The number of personal vehicles rolling on improperly inflated tires has fallen dramatically since 2003, advancing both road safety and fuel efficiency, according to a comprehensive study released today by the Rubber Association of Canada (RAC) to mark National *Be Tire Smart Week* which starts today.

The study, conducted for the RAC by DesRosiers Automotive Consultants, found that 49 per cent of the vehicles inspected had at least one tire that was under- or over-inflated. In 2003, a similar RAC driver survey found that 71 per cent of vehicles tested had one or more improperly inflated tire. The percentage of drivers with one or more tires severely under-inflated by 20 per cent or more – a potentially hazardous condition – also declined significantly to 10 per cent from 23 per cent in 2003.

The survey's not-so-good news is that fewer Canadian drivers (30% versus 39% in 2003) are taking monthly measurements to ensure their tires are inflated to the vehicle manufacturer's recommendation, a practice that is critical to ensuring optimum tire safety, performance and fuel efficiency.

The RAC attributed the rising number of vehicles with properly inflated tires to the dramatic upswing in winter tire changeovers in recent years, public education about the fuel efficiency benefits of proper tire inflation and the growing use of tire pressure monitoring systems.

The survey, which was national in scope, tested driver knowledge and attitudes about tire inflation and maintenance. Motorists in Vancouver, Calgary, Winnipeg, Toronto, Sherbrooke and Fredericton were interviewed at service stations by engineering students, who also checked tire inflation levels and tread depth.

The study also found that significantly higher numbers of Canadian drivers understand that tire under-inflation wastes fuel. When asked why tire inflation was important, the top two reasons cited by four in five drivers surveyed were safety and fuel efficiency. In 2003, the top two reasons given were safety and longer tire life.

While the survey's findings clearly show that Canadian drivers are more knowledgeable about their tires, the study also revealed major information gaps that need to be filled.

The survey, for example, found that, while 52 per cent of drivers knew how to locate the vehicle manufacturer's recommended tire pressure (owner's manual or vehicle placard), nine per cent did not know and 26 per cent wrongly believed that the pressure stamped on the sidewall, which refers to the maximum pressure a tire can contain under maximum load, was the recommended inflation level.

As well, 59 per cent of drivers interviewed made the serious mistake of relying on a visual inspection to tell them if their tire pressures should be measured. In fact, a tire can be under-or over inflated by 20 percent or more and look normal.

“Properly inflated tires deliver the exceptional performance that tire makers want every consumer to have,” says Glenn Maidment, president of the Rubber Association of Canada. “Drivers need to know that improperly inflated tires increase stopping distance; lessen vehicle stability, particularly when cornering; waste fuel and shorten tire life. All it takes to get the outstanding performance your tires are designed to deliver is a reliable tire gauge and five minutes each month to measure and, if necessary, adjust your tire pressures.”

The study, which also examined attitudes towards tire recycling, found that drivers are generally aware and supportive of the work done by Canada’s provincial Tire Stewardship Boards to manage scrap tire recycling operations across the country. More than half the drivers interviewed (58%) said they were aware of tire recycling systems currently in place, and 81 per cent were either “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with the manner in which scrap tires are managed.

“Proper tire inflation and maintenance is a perfect fit for Canadians who care about the environment,” says Maidment. “When you take care of your tires, you not only protect your family and pocket book, you also reduce harmful emissions and the number of scrap tires.”

May 17 to 23, 2010, is National *Be Tire Smart Week*, during which the tire industry, including retailers, distributors and manufacturers, will be reminding motorists about the safety, fuel efficiency and environmental benefits of proper tire inflation and maintenance. Canadian motorists are invited to stop by their local tire retailer to learn from the tire professionals how to make sure their tires are always properly inflated and maintained.

Canadians can learn more about the importance of proper tire inflation and maintenance and *Be Tire Smart Week* by visiting www.betiresmart.ca.

The 2009 Tire Inflation and Attitudinal Study interviewed 1,811 drivers in the fall of 2009. The results are considered accurate within ± 2.5 percent, 19 times out of 20.

Be Tire Smart Week is an advocacy campaign to educate the motoring public about the benefits of proper tire inflation and maintenance. The campaign is a joint initiative of the Rubber Association of Canada, which represents the tire industry, and Natural Resources Canada’s Office of Energy Efficiency. ***Be Tire Smart – Play Your P.A.R.T.***

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Sidebar:

National *Be Tire Smart Week* Inflation Tips

Here are some tire inflation tips for motorists who want the best performance and fuel efficiency from their tires:

- Invest in a reliable tire gauge. The most accurate way to know if your tires need to be inflated or deflated is by measuring their pressure with a reliable gauge monthly. Too many drivers make the mistake of thinking a visual check will tell them if their tire pressures are correct. A tire can be under or over inflated by 20 percent or more and not be noticeable.
- Always inflate your tires to the vehicle manufacturer’s recommendation. The right tire pressure by wheel position is listed on the vehicle placard, which is located on one of the vehicle’s inside door posts, or inside the glove compartment or fuel door. Never use the

tire pressure stamped on the sidewall. That pressure refers to the maximum pressure a tire can contain under maximum load. If you experience difficulty locating your vehicle placard, consult your vehicle's owner's manual for its location.

- You should only measure tire pressure when the vehicle has been stationary for at least three hours, or has not been driven more than two kilometres. Tires heat up when rolling, so if they are measured after driving more than two kilometres, the pressure reading will be inaccurate.

The tire industry recommends an easy, four-step approach to proper tire inflation:

Step One

- Find the recommended inflation pressure for your tires on the vehicle placard. Check the owner's manual for its exact location.

Step Two

- Remember to only measure pressure when the tires are cold. If you have been driving, wait three hours before measuring tire pressure.

Step Three

- Use a tire gauge when measuring pressure. Remove the cap from the valve stem, press the tire gauge onto the valve and take the pressure reading.

Step Four

- 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-check the pressure.

Learn more, visit www.betiresmart.ca.