

WINTER WEATHER TYRES

Tyres are the only parts of the car which are in contact with the road. Safety in acceleration, braking, steering and cornering all depend on a relatively small area of road contact. It is therefore of paramount importance that tyres should be maintained in good condition at all times and that they are appropriate for the expected road conditions. As winter approaches, drivers should start planning for whatever the weather may throw at them. If you need convincing, just think back to previous winters; you can be sure there is always a good mix of snow, ice, rain and dry spells. To cope with this mix of different road conditions, drivers need winter weather tyres.

DON'T GET LEFT OUT IN THE COLD

Selecting the right tyre for your car is always something of a compromise. The vast majority of tyres fitted to cars in the UK are standard 'summer' tyres. By comparison, in many other European countries it is a common practice for drivers to fit winter weather tyres in late autumn and revert back to standard tyres in the late spring. The UK perception that winter weather tyres only give

benefits on snow or ice is years out of date. Modern rubber compound technology and advances in tread pattern design mean that today's winter weather tyres also provide higher levels of road safety on cold and damp road surfaces too. Independent research commissioned by TyreSafe (The UK's leading tyre safety Organisation) found that more than half of UK drivers feel less safe when driving in the winter. Their biggest worry is that they will be involved in an

accident as the roads feel more slippery. With their additional levels of grip, winter weather tyres could allay this fear for many drivers.

STAY SAFE THIS WINTER

Through a typical 12 month period, the UK experiences temperatures ranging from +32oC to as low as -15oC. Given such diverse weather conditions, it's unreasonable to expect one type of tyre to provide consistently high safety levels.

Winter weather tyres provide:

- Higher levels of road safety during the colder winter months.
- Considerably shorter stopping distances on both wet and dry roads at low temperatures.
- Better mileage than normal tyres in winter weather.

The wear on normal tyres increases when used during winter months, reducing mileage by up to 20%.

KEEP ON TRACK WITH WINTER WEATHER TYRES

Temperatures below 7oC are experienced throughout the UK between October and March. The air temperature is crucial to your tyres' ability to perform. When the temperature drops below 7oC the tread compound in normal tyres begins to harden and gives you less grip. The tread compound in winter weather tyres contains more natural rubber to minimise the hardening effect, which gives them extra grip in cold, wet and icy conditions. This means that with winter weather tyres you will experience significantly shorter stopping distances. Today's winter weather tyres are just as quiet and comfortable as normal tyres.

LOOK AFTER YOUR TYRES AND THEY WILL LOOK AFTER YOU

For peace of mind on your journey, make routine checks on your tyres. Every 4 weeks check the pressure of your tyres when they are cold. Check the tread depth of your tyres – the minimum legal UK tread depth is 1.6mm across the central 3/4 of the tyre, however we recommend that tyres are replaced before reaching this minimum level. As your tread depth decreases, your stopping distance in wet weather increases. Check your tyres for damage. Look out for any cuts, cracks or bulges as these can lead to slow punctures and blow-outs. Don't forget to check the tread depth and air pressure of your spare tyre.

HAVE A SAFE JOURNEY

When driving in winter it is important to take some extra precautions to make sure that you are safe on the road. Kevin Clinton, Head of Road Safety at the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents said: "In poor conditions good visibility is vital. Always keep the windscreen and windows clear and check your lights are clean and working. Reduce your speed on slippery roads, and avoid harsh braking or acceleration. Increase the gap between you and the vehicle in front. You should also allow up to 10 times the normal stopping distance for braking, especially on motorways.

TOP TIPS FOR CHECKING TYRE PRESSURES CORRECTLY

1. Check your tyre pressure at least once a month.
2. Tyre pressure should be checked against the vehicle manufacturer's recommended level. This can be found in the vehicle handbook and on a plate which is often located inside the fuel filler flap or on the driver's door sill.
3. Check the pressure when tyres are cold (i.e. when you have travelled less than two miles).
4. If you are carrying a full load of passengers or luggage or will be towing a trailer or caravan, tyre pressures should be increased in line with the vehicle manufacturer's recommendations. Details can be found in the handbook.
5. Ensure a reliable and accurate pressure gauge is used.
6. Check the pressure in all four tyres not forgetting to check the spare tyre as well.
7. While checking pressures, give the rest of the tyre a visual inspection. Remove any stones and other objects embedded in the tread. Look out for any bulges, lumps or cuts.