

What are the Tire "Hot Buttons" for Fleets?

When it comes to the #1 maintenance cost, tires continue to deserve a lot of attention. A good tire program will go a long way in helping the company's bottom line. So what are fleets looking for when it comes to their tires?

- Maximizing fuel economy
- Maximizing tire removal miles
- Maximizing # of retreads/casing

Even a one or two percent increase in fuel economy can save millions of dollars/year in fuel depending on the size of the fleet. One of the past concerns with fuel efficient tires was the possible loss in removal miles. With the advent of new materials and innovative tire construction, a fuel efficient tire design may now yield similar miles to the non-fuel efficient or control tire. The heavier the tire, the more rolling resistance (RR) is generated. A 30/32" tread depth drive tire design will generate higher RR when compared to the same tire that has only 26/32" starting tread depth. Improving fuel economy pretty much always trumps any possible loss in removal miles.

SmartWay publishes a list of both new tires and retreads that meet their "verified" fuel efficient standards. This is helpful information when deciding which are the best fuel efficient (low rolling resistance) tire options.

<http://www.epa.gov/smartway/forpartners/technology.htm>

There are many variables that will affect how many miles a tire will go before reaching its pull point. The legal limit is 4/32" remaining tread depth for steer tires and 2/32" for any other wheel position. Taking a tire down to its legal limit will help on mileage but is not always the best idea for protecting the tire casing from cuts and stone damage. Historical data clearly shows that retreadability is adversely af-

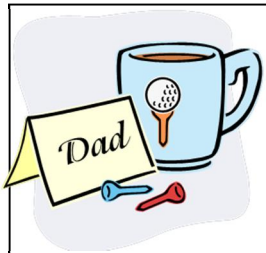
ected by running the tires down to the legal tread depth pull point. Protecting the casing and maximizing the number of retreads per casing is clearly in the fleet's best interest. A retread is typically a third of the price of a new tire.

With a plethora of tire makes/models to choose from including both new tires and retreads, every fleet should be evaluating tire models on a regular basis. It is not uncommon to find as high as a 15% difference in removal mileage from one tire model to another. This is why it is important to have an ongoing tire evaluation program running at your fleet.

Every fleet wants to maximize their tire removal miles and lower their cost/mile. It is important that you choose the proper tire design based on your specific service vocation, routes, loads and vehicle configurations. Working with your tire professional can help insure you choose the best tire for the various wheel positions.

To insure that your tires get the highest miles/32 it is imperative that you maintain the recommended air pressure in them. Running the correct pressure all the time will generate the optimum tire footprint and keep the tire running cool. Heat is a tire's worst enemy when it comes to generating casing issues and will reduce tire removal miles in the process.

Keeping the tire running at the correct tire footprint with the optimum tire pressure will only help maximize the number of casings that can be successfully retreaded. Your local retreader should be able to supply you with a report that details exactly why a casing was rejected for retreading. This is important information to analyze. A careful analysis of this data will help you determine what improvements are required in your tire program to continue to get one, two or even three retreads per casing.



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