



# COMMERCIAL FLEET TIRE DIGEST

*The authoritative guide to reducing commercial tire expenditures from  
Pressure Systems International,  
the manufacturer of the Meritor Tire Inflation System by PSI™*

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## How Drivers Can Reduce Tire Costs

PSI can offer you a Tires 101 Class by contacting Al Cohn [acohnpsi@aol.com](mailto:acohnpsi@aol.com)

Tires are the #1 maintenance cost for commercial trucks and drivers have a major impact on helping fleets reduce this expenditure. Commercial tires continue to increase in price because of the escalating cost of raw materials. Cost for three of the major raw materials for tires have increased significantly over the last few years: Natural rubber costs have more than doubled and steel has also shown double digit increases: Oil is the other major raw material for tires (rubber chemicals are all derived from oil), and with oil at over \$60.00 a barrel, the impact on tire costs are significant. Tire companies continue to raise prices just to keep up with their cost for these raw materials.

\*Drivers need to look for any signs of irregular wear which is an early warning sign for underinflation and/or vehicle alignment issues. The tire tread should be wearing smoothly. If not, the technicians need to check out the vehicle.

\*Drivers should rub their hand over the tire tread and sidewall looking for any signs of punctures or damage.

The 18 tires on a typical tractor-trailer cost anywhere from \$4000 - \$6000, depending upon the specific tire type/design. Running retreads on both the drive and trailer position will keep the tire costs on the lower end of the range. It is important that fleet drivers appreciate that new tires and retreads are a significant investment and can make or break a fleet in the same way that Owner-Operators understand this.

**Drivers have an enormous impact on maximizing tire mileage.** A recent study of a small fleet in the Northeast revealed some interesting results. Ten (10) drivers were assigned to specific tractors married to specific trailers. The ten (10) vehicles had similar payloads and similar routes. The study revealed that **there was a direct correlation between tire performance and driver.** Tires had the fastest treadwear rates on vehicles assigned to drivers who drove fast, made sharp turns, and were hard on their brakes. Age and experience of the drivers was also important. One driver who had been driving for 35 years had the best looking tires and the best treadwear. A 25-year-old driver with 6-months experience had the fastest treadwear and tires with irregular wear. So what did this fleet do to insure that tire performance improves? They have various contests with prizes to the drivers who get the best miles per 32<sup>nd</sup> of tread wear on their tires.

So what can drivers do to maximize the fleet's investment in tires?

Fleets should implement a Tires 101 class on a regular basis for their drivers. Just 20 minutes to remind drivers of the impact that they can have on the tires can go a long way to reducing your annual tire expenditures.

\*The morning walk-around is critical and kicking the outside tires is not enough. They should also check air pressures with a calibrated gauge because tires are designed to run at a given load and inflation pressure. If the tire is underinflated only bad things will result. Irregular wear will develop, fuel economy will get worse, retreadability will be reduced, and tires will not reach their target removal miles.

## Q & A PSI ANSWERS YOUR QUESTIONS

**Q.** I'm a driver and I use a standard stick gauge to check my tire pressure. How accurate of a reading will I get from this gauge?

**A.** That depends. Even when new, the stick gauges purchased at truck stops and other similar locations are only accurate to +/- 3 PSI. And, if stick gauges are dropped, they can get out of calibration pretty easily. We advise that these gauges initially be calibrated to a master gauge and then checked on some type of routine basis after that. This practice should ensure that this tool is as accurate as possible in measuring your tires' air pressure.

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