

*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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Summer Season and Your Tires

**PSI can
offer you a
Tires 101
Class by
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Have you noticed an abundance of "alligators" (truck tire pieces & parts) on the highways during the hot, summer season? If you're driving through states like Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada, Texas and Florida during the summer months, it appears that these road alligators are everywhere. They can be very dangerous for vehicles that not only run over them, but for those vehicles that make sudden lane change maneuvers to avoid the rubber on the road. Most of the public believe that these road alligators are "bad" retreads. But alligators are both new and retreaded tires.

Any tire, regardless if it is a new tire or a retread that runs with little or no air, will eventually fail, because tires require air to carry the load. When tires are underinflated, the excessive heat generated by the increased tire deflection will cause the rubber compounds to break down and lead to failure. Over 90% of the alligators found on the road are due to running underinflated, very few are actually due to a bad retread.

During the summer season, when the ambient temperatures can get well over 100° F, and some road temperatures can reach almost 200° F, the heat problems caused by underinflation are more extreme. Tires that are run underinflated will be more prone to failure in these temperatures. A very famous tire engineer once stated,



"Heat is to tires as Kryponite is to Superman"...in other words, it's worst enemy. Taken all together, hot summer temperatures, underinflated tires, heavy loads, and traveling at high speeds (not that this ever happens), and you have a recipe for tire disaster.... that's exactly why you see more alligators on the highway in the summer season.

What can fleets do to minimize tire related issues during the summertime months?

- Tire pressures need to be checked more frequently in the summer.

*If you normally check air once a month, check twice a month

*If you normally check air once a week, check twice a week

*Make sure your tire gauges are checked versus a master gauge

- Plan your tire program around mounting new, deep tread depth tires prior to the winter season

*When summer hits, the tires will be worn down and generate less heat

- Inspect tires for punctures and damage more frequently in the summer months.

*Tire punctures tend to increase during the summer because the tread rubber becomes hotter and "softer" and acts as a magnet to nails and road debris

- Initiate a tires 101 review course for your drivers with emphasis on summer heat issues.

Using automatic tire inflation systems where the air is automatically added whenever the tire is below the recommended specification, is the best and most practical way to insure that your tires do not become alligators on the road.

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Q & A PSI ANSWERS YOUR QUESTIONS

Q. My radial truck tires are speed rated at 65 mph. Is it OK to run at 70 or 75 mph without causing damage to the tire?

A. The Tire & Rim Association publishes a table to specifically address this issue. If running your vehicle between 66 - 70 mph your maximum tire load capacity decreases by 4% with an inflation pressure increase of 5 PSI. If you travel at 71 to 75 mph, then the maximum tire load capacity decreases by 12% with the same inflation increase of 5%.