



Your Role in Tire Safety

March 2019

Everything carried on a truck rides on its tires. While well maintained tires can run safely for hundreds of thousands of over-the-road miles, improper loading (under-inflation or overloading) or poor maintenance can reduce tire performance, shorten service life or cause tire failures. As a professional driver, you need to take your role in ensuring proper tire safety seriously. Here are some tips to keep you, and your tires, rolling:

- **Know the regulations.** Motor carrier regulations set minimum requirements for safe tire operation, including provisions for proper inflation and loading, minimum tread depth and safe tire condition. Compliance with these regulations does not guarantee safety but it significantly reduces the likelihood that a tire issue will cause a crash.
- **Conduct proper pre- and post-trip inspections.** Aside from compliance, the leading cause for roadside breakdowns in the private fleet community is tires. And a roadside breakdown is a major inconvenience for you. Many of the potential problems can be caught in a thorough pre-trip and post-trip inspections. During these inspections, it is important for you to visually inspect tires for any sign of irregular wear, cuts, snags, and punctures and report any issues to the maintenance department either directly or through a DVIR.
- **Maintain Proper Air Pressure.** It is said that a 15% under inflation in a tire equals approximately an 8% decrease in expected tread mileage. Under inflated tires can significantly take a bite out of the unit's fuel mileage. Tires can lose 3 psi per month just due to air migration. The pre-trip should also include checking the tire air pressures with a tire gauge. Thumping tires with a hammer or a club simply is not good enough.
- **Ensure proper alignment.** In addition to potentially affecting safe control of the vehicle, improper alignment will at least rapidly wear down tires. Make sure that you are checking for irregular tire wear during your pre- and post-trip inspections.
- **Follow Proper Tire Inflation.** Tire inflation should be checked at appropriate intervals for the operation. You should know what the recommended air pressure is for steer, drive, and trailer tires.
- **Understand Tire Specifications.** Tires are rated not only for size, but for maximum load, type of service and speed of operation. Tire specifications on the vehicle tire information label should be followed. Inspectors may check for overloading of tire capacity when scales are in use.
- **Ensure Tread Depths.** Across axles and between tandem axles, tread depths need to be checked and recorded because DOT has a legal limit $4/32$ " for steer tires and $2/32$ " of rubber for drive and trailer tires. That means that if any spot in the major grooves of a steer tire are found to be $4/32$ " or less, that tire must be removed from service.

Proper tire management ensures a safe, comfortable and fuel efficient ride. Make sure you're taking the steps to protect your tires – and yourself.