

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT SNOW TIRES

When it comes to driving through winter weather, your tires are the ones that take the brunt of the punishment. But you can arm your tires to make sure you reach your destination safely – even in the snow.

SNOW

Many car-makers and repair technicians recommend mounting snow tires to your vehicle before the winter driving season. These specially designed tires are made to help you trek through the snow – even in areas of heavy accumulation.

If you choose to go down this route, be sure to splurge on all four tires. Your alignment can be thrown off if you drive on two standard and two snow tires, and that can cause bigger problems for your vehicle down the road.

And keep your standard tires handy. Once the winter lets

up, you'll be happy to get them back on your vehicle to improve your fuel efficiency and overall handling.

ALL-SEASON TIRES

Another option is all-season tires that you drive year-round – winter and summer. This will help you avoid having to remember to change your tires before the winter weather or needing to store two sets of rims.

While all-season tires are more effective than a standard tire, you won't get the full advantage of having specialized

snow tires on your vehicle. These tires are designed specifically to help drivers blast through snow and are tested vigorously for this purpose.

TIRE TYPE AND TREAD

Snow tires are the recommended options in areas with heavy winter weather. But you may still decide to stick with your regular tires for price or convenience purposes. If you do, be sure to check the tread depth of your tires. Replace any tire that has less than 3/32 inches of tread, Says AAA.

SIGNS IT IS TIME TO REPLACE YOUR TIRES

When it comes to maintaining your car, few things are as important as your tires.

Your tires keep you safe, providing the traction you need on the road and in bad weather, and also play a big role in the comfort of your car. Good tires with the proper air pressure will give you the best ride and handling, not to mention better gas mileage.

CRACKS

Extreme temperatures, prolonged exposure to sunlight and changes in humidity can all eventually lead to the sidewall of your tires breaking down. Good tires will have a rubbery, supple texture to them. If they look dry and cracked, you could be risking a blowout, even if the tread depth is still thick.

NOISE AND VIBRATION

If you've noticed a new noise coming from the wheel wells or a vibration that changes with the speed of the vehicle, there's a good chance you could have a problem with your tires. Even if your tires look perfect, sometimes they can have problems internally. Layers could be separating inside the tire, it could be wearing unevenly, or it might have a flat spot from prolonged skidding.



BLISTERS

When you look at the tire from in front or back, it should have a smooth, even surface. If you see any blisters or bulges on the tire, they could be weak spots that could lead to a blowout at any time.

TREAD DEPTH

The first and most obvious thing to check is the depth of the treads. All tires wear down over time, and it's important to check them regularly to be sure the treads are still in good condition. An old rule of thumb involves using a penny to measure the depth. Rotate it so that the top of Abraham Lincoln's head is pointed in toward the tire. If the tread is shallow enough to see Abe's head without any obstruction, it's past time to get new tires.

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