

Automotive

Different Roads, Same Lubrication Needs

By Norm Hudecki
For News USA

(NU) - The demand for light trucks is growing virtually as fast as auto makers can produce them. In fact, light truck sales hit a record 6.1 million in 1994 and accounted for more than 40 percent of all light-vehicle sales.

It is hard to say why have sales of these vehicles have reached such heights. Certainly auto makers have done a great job in developing and

marketing the products.

Industry surveys have shown that at least two-thirds of the people who buy light-duty trucks use them solely as personal vehicles, not for hauling loads or pulling a trailer. The growth in this area is expected to continue.

Not surprisingly, companies tied to the truck industry are capitalizing on this trend with everything from bedliners to sliding windows to special wheels and tires.

One area that I often receive questions about is lubrication for these light trucks. Should light truck



owners treat their engine's lubrication system any differently than a passenger car's system?

"No" is the response I give virtually every time. Then I tell them to consult their owner's manual, which recommends a viscosity grade of motor oil for their application — not a gimmick product marketed as a truck oil.

Quality oils have the proper mix of foam inhibitors, extreme pressure and anti-wear friction modifiers.

Getting a Grip On Tire Purchases

(NU) - When it's time to replace your tires, do you go 'round and 'round trying to decide what to buy?

Here, from NTW, National Tire Warehouse, are some facts about tires to help you get a better grip on things.

• Tread design determines how well your new tires will evacuate water and provide traction in the snow. For instance, lateral shoulder grooves provide a path for the water to travel from the center of the tire out to the sides.

The tread design also determines how much noise the tires make.

• Steel belts are the layers of fine steel wires encased in soft rubber that provide stiffness and spread the load across the tread face to improve tread life and traction.

The belt edge cushion provides cushioning during cornering and braking.

• Carcass plies determine the size, load, carrying capacity and shape of the tire. In passenger cars, they're usually made of polyester.

• The key to tire operation is the "contact patch," or area of the tire that comes into actual contact with the road. Although it's only about the size of your hand, it allows the tire to grip the road and transmit torque.

Performance

How do tires affect your car's performance? Here are some tips to keep in mind.

— Choosing tires with wider section widths, a lower profile

(shape) and a higher performance rating can improve steering, response and overall cornering force.

— Larger diameter wheels with shorter tire sidewalls will improve your car's response performance and handling, but can also stiffen your car's ride.

— A tire's speed rating is marked on the sidewall. While you'll probably never drive that fast, reducing the original equipment speed rating may have a negative impact on your car's handling capability.

For more information on making a successful match between your car and its tires, call NTW. To locate a store near you, call 1-800-355-9500.

Auto Safety Hotline Puts You in The Driver's Seat

News USA

(NU) - Brakes that fail, improperly manufactured tires that may blow out unexpectedly, wiring problems that result in a fire or loss of lighting — all are examples of safety defects that can have tragic consequences.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration is asking consumers to help protect themselves and others by calling the toll-free Auto Safety Hotline — 1-800-424-9393 — to help identify and learn about safety problems with motor vehicles and automotive equipment.

Operators, including a Spanish-speaking operator, are on duty weekdays from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. EST, and an answering machine is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Hearing-impaired consumers can call the teleprinter — 1-800-424-9153.

A new feature of the hotline this year is "fax on demand." Just call the hotline, enter your fax number and, within minutes, you will receive 1995 crash test information. Child safety information and Tire Quality Grading reports can be obtained the same way.

Remember, if a safety-related defect exists, the manufacturer must repair it at no cost to the owner. NHTSA uses the information from hotline calls (1-800-424-9393) to get that defect identification process started.

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