

# THINKING OF STUDDED SNOW TIRES?

Think about studless tires instead

By **SAM BARBEE**  
Staff Writer

When the winter months approach, drivers begin to think about switching to snow tires on their vehicles. Most will go with studded snow tires to dig into the soft precipitation and give more grip.

But use of studded snow tires is beginning to recede. Several organizations, including the Oregon Department of Transportation are beginning to wonder whether studded snow tires are actually a problem. According to Loren Pursfull, the manager of G&S Tire Factory in Hermiston, ODOT is trying to move drivers away from studded snow tires and to studless snow tires, which are less damaging to roads.

“ODOT’s saying it’s costing a lot of money,” Pursfull said of studded snow tires. “The studded snow tire ain’t going anywhere, but you’ll see (them used) less and less on passenger rigs. You’ll see more studless on passenger rigs.”

In addition, rubber technology has increased to the point where studs are almost unneeded. According to the Bridgestone Tire website, “breakthroughs” in tire technology have “nearly eliminated” the need for studs in tires. Though studless snow tires aren’t new, they’re becoming more common as the technology improves and prices go down.

“Every tire manufacture now is coming up with (a studless),” Pursfull said. “Even the cheapest tire made out there is coming out with its own studless snow tire.”



A studded snow tire sits at G&S Tire Factory in Hermiston. Note the metal studs embedded in the tread surrounded by siping, or narrow slits cut in the tread.



Studded (foreground) and studless snow tires sit side by side at G&S tire Factory in Hermiston. Note the similarities in siping of the two tire types, yet the absence of studs on the tires in the back.

Studless tires have become cheaper as the rubber compounds become easier to produce. For a time studded tires were the norm because of the affordability of them. Studless snow tires were just too expensive.

Now, however, studded tires run at about \$130, and some studless tires can be purchased for a similar price.

“Really, the studs are for an extra traction, ice, that type of deal,” Pursfull said. Pursfull also said that

if you are one to make use of the mountain passes regularly, it is recommended that you carry a set of chains with you. They are relatively easy to install with just a couple of steps (most sets of chains come with instructions) and can be required through passes even if you have traction tires on your vehicle.

But, Pursfull pointed out, it all comes down to preference. Those who feel the need to be safe will get studded tires regardless. But those who want the best bang for their buck will go with an all-season set of tires that doesn’t need to be changed or the studless tires with siping that give as much grip as tires with studs. Tire siping, according to the Les Schwab Tire Centers website, is the process



G&S Tire Factory manager Loren Pursfull explains the benefits and rise of studless snow tires last week in Hermiston.



G&S Tire Factory of Hermiston is ready for the winter months, with some studded snow tires (right) and studless snow tires (left) on display for sale last week.

of cutting thin slits across the surface of a tire. This is done to improve traction on snow, ice or wet roads. It can also reduce tire heat when road are extremely hot.

Studded tires, though, end up looking almost identical to studless — both have siping — it’s just that studded tires have studs. The type of driving, amount of driving, type of vehicle and budget are all variables that affect how people buy tires. At the end of the day, Pursfull said, it’s about

what people want to put on their cars.

“The way people drive and how they are nowadays, there’s just no set thing in stone for anybody,” he said. “I’m gonna put you in something that you’re comfortable in and that I’m comfortable with. I don’t want to sell something to someone just to get a sale. That’s what it’s all about.”

The first day studded tires can legally be used is Nov. 1, and the last day is April 15.

## Give your car a checkup before winter

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**  
Staff Writer

Extreme weather of any kind can be hard on a car, and winter’s no exception.

Jerry Enders, the owner of Fenders by Enders, said his Hermiston auto repair shop performs free winter preparedness checks.

But if car owners are going at it alone as they prepare for the oncoming ice and snow, Enders had a number of tips to keep local vehicles running strong through the winter months.

Enders said drivers should

always check their car’s fluids, like transmission and engine coolant, not just to see if its at the right level, but to also make sure its clean.

Car parts that are made of rubber, like engine hoses and windshield wipers can also take a beating from the cold. Enders suggested taking a look at those parts and replacing them if need be.

Regardless of car owners’ willingness to get their hands dirty, Enders said it’s always a good idea to get a professional to look at a car before the winter hits.

Whether it’s an auto repair shop or a dealer, Enders said the variety of cars on the roads these days means each vehicle has different needs to make it to spring.

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