

HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR TIRES

While tires don't last forever, there are several ways to ensure you get the most out of them before it's time for replacements. Along with fuel costs, replacing tires is one of the largest expenses an owner-operator faces. So, we've gathered the top five tips to help you get the most bang for your buck from your tires.

TOP 5 TIPS:

1. MAINTAIN PROPER INFLATION

Improper inflation is the number one cause of premature tire removal, according to Sharon Cowart, product marketing director for Michelin Americas Truck Tires. Not having your tires at the proper inflation level can cause irregular wear, create fatigue spots, increase/decrease the contact area with the road, and much more. Tires are specifically designed and tested to be used at the proper inflation levels, so over- or under-inflating your tires means you won't be getting the most out of them.

Also, research from the American Trucking Association's Technology & Maintenance Council has shown under-inflation by just 10% (less than 11 psi on a 105-psi tire) can result in a fuel economy drop of 1.5%. By taking a few minutes to properly inflate (or deflate) your tires, you could save money on fuel and extend the life of your big rig's wheels.



2. PERFORM ROUTINE SHOCK MAINTENANCE

Make sure the bushings at the top and bottom of your shocks are inspected and replaced whenever worn out or damaged. If you can grab the shock absorber and rattle it, the bushings have pounded themselves out. Shocks should be checked every maintenance service cycle and replaced in pairs if there's any sign of leaking fluid. Why is this important to tire life? Because worn or broken shocks add undue pressure and wear to your tires. Instead of the load weight getting properly absorbed by your shocks when going over bumps or rough roads, your tires are taking the hit when they shouldn't have to.

TOP 5 TIPS, CONTINUED:

3. PRACTICE GOOD DRIVING HABITS

Driving aggressively increases tire wear and reduces tire life. Speeding, hard braking, curbing, and tight turns can cause tires to wear faster and/or develop irregular wear patterns. On the other hand, driving more conservatively can help reduce wear and extend tire life. Steady acceleration, smooth braking, and gentle steering are simple ways to get the most out of your tires. Many of the problems caused by bad driving habits show up as uneven tire wear.



4. CHECK YOUR SUSPENSION

Replace any suspension components that show excessive wear. You may think you're saving money by waiting until the last possible moment to replace those components, but you should also consider the excessive and irregular wear on your tires. On the steer axle, change your shocks at least as often as you change your tires to make sure they are working in synergy. On the drive axle, experts recommend replacing shocks halfway through the tire's life AND when the tires are changed.



5. DOUBLE DOWN ON YOUR ALIGNMENT

Make sure to take your rig to the alignment shop with the old tires still on. Technicians can then read your tire wear to learn what's wrong with your alignment and determine more precisely how to make adjustments. According to Continental, when tires are out of alignment and begin to wear unevenly, the quicker you have to replace them and the more money you end up paying for fuel. Vibration in your steering wheel and/or more road noise coming from the tires are indicators your alignment needs to be checked.

It can be easy to focus maintenance efforts on big ticket items like your engine, but keeping an eye on your tires can save you a lot of time and money. Always inspect your tires as carefully as you would the rest of your rig to ensure you catch any issues before they become full-blown problems.

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