

HIGHWAY SAFETY



Tires—Technical Marvels That Are Generally Ignored

(NAPSA)—Most drivers don't have a clue as to what type of tires are on their car. Even though tires are one of the most technologically advanced parts of a car, as well as the only bits that actually touch the road, they are not top, middle or even bottom of mind for most consumers.

"It's a shame tires are largely ignored," said Fred Koplin, director of marketing communications at Yokohama Tire Corporation. "They influence the braking, steering, comfort, handling, safety and fuel efficiency of every vehicle. Tires are technical marvels, receiving a daily pounding over all sorts of surfaces in all kinds of weather conditions, yet they continue to perform with incredible effectiveness."

One reason some people pay little attention to tires is because there are so many types available on the market—at last count about 3,500 sizes and types from dozens of manufacturers. Importantly, though, having the wrong tire on a vehicle is akin to wearing shoes that don't fit—they don't work well and may be harmful. Cornering, acceleration, wet-road traction, tire wear, ride, styling and fuel economy can be modified by changing tires. In short, knowing what types of tires are available is important because it can save money and fuel and vastly improve a vehicle's ride and handling.

"A tire generally delivers both mileage and performance, but not both equally," Koplin said. "Tires using a harder rubber compound will last longer and boost gas mileage, but could deliver less traction and more noise, while softer tread compound tires handle well but wear more quickly."



A vehicle with properly inflated tires gets better gas mileage and increases tread wear.

Koplin offers some basic definitions to help drivers pick the best tire for their vehicle:

- **All-Season Tire:** As stated, a tire designed for all four seasons. They can eliminate the need for snow tires in some moderate-winter areas.

- **High-Performance Tire:** Tires designed for handling at higher speeds.

- **Light Truck Tire:** Designed for sport utility vehicles, pickup trucks, recreational vehicles and some small commercial vehicles.

- **Radial Tire:** "Radial" describes the way the tire is constructed. These tires are on most passenger cars as well as light trucks.

- **Touring Performance Tire:** A tire providing the ride comfort of a standard passenger car tire yet possessing some high-performance tire characteristics.

"Replacing tires is like buying insurance or going to the dentist," Koplin said. "No one wants to do it, but it's necessary. The more you know, the less painful it will be."

For more information on tires, visit www.yokohamatire.com or the Rubber Manufacturers Association's Web site at www.rma.org.