



# TIRE TOPICS

## Traction Crucial For Winter Driving

(NAPSA)—Keeping your car safely on the road when the weather gets chilly could depend on four things: your tires.

It's a good idea to replace the all-season tires you may have with winter-season tires before the mercury drops below 45 degrees. All-season tires are not really designed for severe cold weather. Snow and ice can collect in treads, and tires lose their flexibility in temperatures below 45° F. All this affects traction.

Fortunately, today's winter-season tires are much more technologically advanced and safer than "snow" tires of the past. They are engineered with chemical compounds made to maintain their flexibility, which keeps more rubber connected to the road. Winter tires also have special tread designs that "bite" into the road to deliver 25 to 50 percent more traction than all-season tires.

The more traction and control you have, the better you're able to brake without skidding. The braking distance of a winter tire can be as much as 10 percent shorter—about two car lengths—than that of all-season tires.

The experts at the largest independent tire and wheel retailer in the U.S., Discount Tire Company, say it's best not to mix winter and all-season tires, especially on wet or icy roads. Different tires can create a traction mismatch and difficult handling. Rather, they recommend you install four winter-season tires for optimum safety and handling.

As with all tires, winter tires perform best when properly inflated. The level should be listed in your owner's manual. A 10-degree



**Many drivers believe all-wheel or four-wheel-drive vehicles don't need winter-season tires, but handling features are only as good as the traction provided by the tires that contact the road.**

drop in temperature causes tires to lose a pound of air pressure, so in addition to once-monthly checks, test your air pressure after frosts. Check the tires prior to driving for accurate readings.

### Tire Tips

More steps you can take to drive down your risk of tire trouble include:

- Make sure your tires are properly balanced and rotated. This should be done every 5,000 to 8,000 miles or as recommended by the tire manufacturer.
- Make sure the wheels are properly aligned.
- Tires should have a minimum tread depth of  $\frac{1}{16}$  of an inch. Put a penny in the tread upside down. If you can see Lincoln's head, it's time for new tires.
- Drive at the speed limit. High speeds cause higher tire temperature and extra tire wear.
- When possible, start and stop your vehicle slowly and decelerate around corners.

### Learn More

More tips and facts are at [www.tires.com](http://www.tires.com).