

Tire Dealer Calls Driver's Education Instructors Back-to-School

(NAPSA)—Even driver's education teachers need the occasional tune-up. At least that's what tire retailer Olin Mott believes. The Hillsborough County, Fla., businessman invited local driver's education instructors to an area high school for his first "Driver's Education Professional Study Day," in which teachers-turned-students reviewed safe driving techniques. Mott, not surprisingly, led the session on the importance of tire maintenance.

"Workshops like this can be especially useful this time of year as both students and driver's education teachers return to school," says Mac Demere, former driving school instructor and currently a test driver for Michelin, which provided tire guides to the workshop. He notes that checking tires seasonally can lead to year-round safety. "Many drivers remember to check their tires before winter starts, but they sometimes forget that there are three other seasonal changes that can affect tires."

For students who will begin driving this fall, or those already licensed, it's never too early to take an interest in the basics of tire maintenance. When it comes to driver's education, proper tire care means giving the student driver tires that perform at their best in virtually all conditions. Safety is the obvious advantage of this, but there are financial benefits as well.

"There are several easy steps teenagers can take to guarantee

that they'll make the grade not only in the classroom but on the road," says Demere. First, be sure to check tire pressure monthly and before any trip. (Look for a sticker that shows the correct pressure on the driver's doorpost, on the glove compartment lid, on the fuel filler door or in the owner's manual.) Properly inflated tires will improve fuel mileage, ride performance, and vehicle handling. "Underinflated tires cause the tread to wear faster and unevenly," he says.

Worn tires, in fact, may indicate a host of problems, such as misalignment, tire and wheel imbalance, or suspension problems. Worn tires may also contribute to hydroplaning—the skimming effect caused by tires losing contact with a surface covered by water.

Demere uses a handy trick to diagnose the wear and tear on his tires. "Place a penny into the shallowest groove of the tread with Lincoln's head facing down," he suggests. "If the top of the head is visible, then the tire should be replaced. So you should start shopping for tires before that point."

Safe driving is not only about learning the rules of the road, it's also about making sure your car and its tires are in good shape. As Mott pointed out to his class of driver's education teachers (who will no doubt tell their students), "your car is only as safe as you make it."