

Tire Topics

Check Your Tires Before Your Trip

(NAPSA)—Keeping your car on the road to safety and savings can start with something as simple as well-maintained tires.

According to the Rubber Manufacturers Association, about 11 percent of vehicles on the road have at least one bald tire, and 55 percent of vehicles have at least one underinflated tire.

Ongoing preventive maintenance—which can take less than 10 minutes—at least every month or before long trips is the best method to maximize tire performance, say the experts at Cooper Tire. Before hitting the road, drivers should conduct do-it-yourself maintenance checks, examining tires for proper inflation, damage or excessive wear and tear.

- **Treading firmly.** The only piece of a vehicle to touch the road is the tires, making tire tread—a key factor in handling, cornering, accelerating and braking—a vital part of overall tire maintenance. Tire tread depth should be more than $\frac{3}{32}$ of an inch deep all around the tire, and drivers can check this by using a penny.

Insert the edge of the coin into the tread with Lincoln going in head first. If the top of Lincoln's head is covered by tread, there's an acceptable amount of tread; if the top of his head is visible at any location on the tire, the tire is worn out and should be replaced.

- **Wearing well.** While examining the tread, also look for signs of uneven wear or damage such as cuts, cracks, splits, punctures and bulges. These conditions shorten the life of tires and, if not corrected, may do further damage to the tire, or air loss may occur.

- **Putting the pressure on.** Tire pressure also plays a critical



The first step toward an enjoyable road trip may be making sure your tires are in good shape.

role in the overall performance of tires as underinflation creates excessive stress on the tire, while overinflation can cause uneven wear in addition to handling and braking issues. A common myth is that the tire pressure listed on the sidewall is the optimal pressure, while in reality it is the maximum pressure.

Drivers should follow the guidelines found in the vehicle owner's manual or tire placard (or sticker) attached to the vehicle door edge, doorpost, glove box door, trunk or fuel door.

- **Professional help.** Should any of these checks reveal the need for required maintenance—or when in doubt about the condition of their tires—drivers should take vehicles to a tire dealer for a professional inspection, suggests Chuck Yurkovich, vice president of global technology for Cooper Tire.

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