

# WHERE THE RUBBER MEETS THE ROAD

You've probably heard the saying "*Where the Rubber Meets the Road*" used in a variety of contexts. For the upcoming rally the context is safety. With safety in mind we would like to offer a few friendly suggestions to make sure your rubber is prepared to meet the road. Safe tires are often an overlooked key factor in keeping a vehicle in contact with the road. Your safety and driving enjoyment can be enhanced by taking a few moments to assess the condition of your wheels, tires, valve stems and tubes.

Please inspect all 5 tires carefully for any defects such as wear, dry rot or decay, bulges in the sidewalls, and any previous repairs or patches. If in doubt, replace questionable tires with appropriate size and speed-rated replacements. If your car has bias ply tires, we recommend replacing those with radial tires for the rally. Keep the bias ply tires for show and mount radials for driving safety and comfort.

While not as visible as wear, tire age is another factor to consider when evaluating wheel safety. Old age (we're talking tires) often becomes the culprit of stopping your forward progress and it usually happens at the most inconvenient times. Please do not arbitrarily decide your tires are safe since they have little or no miles on them. If a car is seldom driven tire age still applies. Permanent flat spots may have developed making an already less than modern ride seem Stone Age. The only safeguard against age related tire failure is to replace old rubber with new rubber and personally inspect the job to insure proper mounting. In Arizona, tires should be replaced every 6 years irrespective of mileage.

Valve stems should also be inspected carefully for cracking - steel valve stems are recommended as they are not affected by extended high speeds and heat like rubber stems tend to be. If you have wire wheels, confirm that your wheels have protective rim strips in place and fresh tubes are properly installed. Take a close look at the valve stems to ensure proper and protected placement (protective grommets are a good idea) through the rim. Also inspect all spokes for proper tension and that the wheels spin true. A spare tube can be all that stands between finishing the rally in your vintage automobile versus finishing the rally in a Bell Lexus. A diligently sorted out vehicle includes attention to wheels, tires and tubes.

Spare tires are required for all cars participating in the rally and can be carried in one of the tow vehicles if necessary. Of all the many mechanical problems an older vehicle may develop, tire failure can be the most dangerous. We want everyone to keep safely rolling along!



# HOW TO CARE FOR YOUR TIRES

## THE BASICS

### PRESSURE:

Maintain the correct air pressure in your tires. Under inflation can lead to tire failure. The right amount of air pressure can be found on the vehicle in various places, in the owner's manual or in the case of vintage automobiles, use good sound judgment.

- Check air pressures when the tire is cool - meaning not hot from driving even a mile. (Note: if you have to drive a distance to get air, check and record the tire pressure first and add the appropriate air pressure when you get to the pump. It is normal for tires to heat up and the air pressure inside to go up as you drive. Never "bleed" tires when the tires are hot! )
- Don't forget to air up your spare. Some spare tires require higher inflation pressure.
- Note: tire air pressure goes up (in warm weather) and down (in cold weather) 1-2 pounds for every 10 degrees of temperature change.

### ALIGNMENT

Misalignment of wheels in the front or rear can cause uneven and rapid tread wear. If you are fortunate enough to have someone you trust with your vintage car, have your alignment checked periodically as specified in your vehicle owner's manual or whenever you have an indication of trouble such as "pulling" or vibration.

### TREAD

Tires should be replaced when the tread is worn down to 1/16 of an inch in order to prevent skidding and hydroplaning. Remember, the older the car the greater the risk. An easy test: place a penny into a tread groove. If part of Lincoln's head is covered by the tread you're driving with the proper amount of tread. If you can see all of his head you should buy a new tire.

This information is part of a consumer education program of the Rubber Manufacturers Association. Proper tire care and safety is simple and easy.



# THE SIDEWALL STORY

## INTERPRETING YOUR TIRE'S MARKINGS:

Your tire has very useful information molded into the sidewall. It shows the name of the tire, its size, whether it is tubeless or tube type, the maximum load and maximum inflation, the important safety warning and much more information.

### PASSENGER TIRES

Shown below is the sidewall of a popular "P-metric," speed-rated auto tire. "P" stands for passenger; "215" represents the width of the tire in millimeters; "65" is the ratio of height to width; "R" means radial; "15" is the nominal rim diameter code; and "95H" is the optional service description that consists of the load index (95) and the speed symbol (H). Some older speed-rated tires may include the speed symbol immediately before the "R" instead of showing a service description.

- A **"B"** in place of the **"R"** means the tire is belted bias construction.
- A **"D"** in place of the **"R"** means diagonal bias construction.
- **"M+S"** with the mountain/snowflake symbol is the designation that the tire meets the RMA definitions for use in severe snow conditions.

The maximum load is shown in kg (kilograms) and in lbs (pounds), and maximum pressure in kPa (kilopascals) and in psi (pounds per square inch).

The letters "DOT" certify compliance with all applicable safety standards established by the Department of Transportation (DOT).

Adjacent to this is a tire identification or serial number. This serial number is a code with up to 12 digits that are a combination of numbers and letters. The last characters are numbers identifying the week and year of manufacture. Tires manufactured prior to 2000 have a three digit date code. Any tires with a three digit date code should be considered unsafe due to old age. Our tire diagram shows a date code of 5107. this tire was manufactured in the 51st week of 2007.

The sidewall also shows the type of cord and number of plies in the sidewall and under the tread. The DOT requires tire manufacturers to grade passenger car tires based on three performance factors: tread wear, traction and temperature resistance.

