



The spare truth -

The importance of maintaining your spare tyre.

The European tyre industry urges drivers not to take their spare wheels for granted and to check the integrity of the spare tyre regularly. Having a serviceable spare wheel can make the difference between a flat tyre being a quick inconvenience and a vehicle spending hours and hours off the road.

There was a time when spare wheels were identical to, and interchangeable with, all those on the vehicle. Most vehicle manufacturers are increasingly supplying spare wheels that are different in appearance and size to the normal wheels.

These 'emergency' spare wheels are usually subjected to some speed and distance condition, detailed on the wheel itself.

Typically there will be a maximum speed of 80km/h because a mismatched wheel may compromise the vehicle's handling and dynamics, especially at higher speeds.

There might also be limitations on the spare's position on a vehicle and a maximum distance for which it can be used. It is also becoming more common for vehicle-makers not to provide spare wheels at all. All temporary-use spares are only intended as an emergency replacement to get the vehicle to a repairer.

It is becoming increasingly more common for vehicles not to be fitted with spare tyres, but with alternative solutions for mobility such as run flat tyres or tyres with built-in-sealants.

Drivers should take note of what their vehicle is equipped with in order to be prepared for any emergencies.

After a puncture, it is important to get the tyre repaired or replaced straight away and to take advice from the tyre dealer on repositioning the wheels on the vehicle.

As well as being good practice to maintain a spare tyre, it is also a wise move to prevent you being stranded at the roadside. Some motoring organisations will make an extra charge to motorists who do not have a usable spare wheel after they have been called to a breakdown because of a puncture.



How can drivers thoroughly inspect their tyres?

Every driver has a responsibility to visually inspect their tyres, tread depth and tyre pressure in order to ensure maximum road safety and tyre performance. Checking tyre tread depth is easily done by looking at the Tread Wear Indicators, which can be found in around six places on the tyre. For the uninitiated, a TWI is a rubber moulding raised above the base of the tread groove - when the adjacent tread has worn down to the minimum level, the tyre should be changed.

The EU stipulates a minimum tread depth of 1.6mm in passenger car tyres. Check all of the grooves. Inadequate depth can pose a safety hazard. As always, when in any doubt speak to a specialist. Drivers are encouraged to take their vehicles for regular tyre inspections at dealers.

Drivers must consult a specialist immediately if they spot any blisters, ruptures or cuts exposing the casing on a tyre - or if a tyre has undergone a violent impact that might have caused internal damage. A bump against the kerb or encounter with a pothole can cause such damage, which can affect on the safety of a tyre.

Tyres showing signs of ozone-cracking - those unsightly gashes or webs of fissures - should be replaced. Drivers should check regularly their tyre inflation pressure - it is important both for safety and fuel-efficiency.