

## When measuring tire inflation, a gaze is no substitute for a gauge

### ***Measuring and maintaining correct tire inflation with a tire gauge is a road safety essential.***

Under-inflation is the most common cause of tire failure and can lead to poor or delayed braking, steering or acceleration; not surprising when you consider that the air contained in tires supports about 95 per cent of a vehicle's weight.

Tires that are under-inflated have a smaller footprint on the road surface, which weakens their grip. The result is reduced stopping, cornering and handling capabilities that worsen with the severity of under-inflation. Seriously under-inflated tires can also fail suddenly due to extreme heat build up.

Beyond obeying the speed limit and driving defensively, motorists can protect themselves and their families by measuring their tires' inflation levels monthly to ensure they are always inflated to the vehicle manufacturer's recommendation.

"Our research shows clearly that tire under-inflation is both widespread and a significant safety issue," says Glenn Maidment, President of the Rubber Association of Canada (RAC), which represents Canada's tire makers. "Tire makers build incredible performance capabilities into their tires to give motorists a safe and enjoyable driving experience. But it is up to vehicle owners to ensure that they properly inflate and maintain their tires, so they perform as their builders intended."

According to RAC research, nearly one quarter of Canadian drivers have at least one tire that is severely under-inflated by more than 20 percent, and nearly 70 per cent drive on one or more tires that are under-inflated by more than 10 percent.

Improperly inflated tires also wear faster and use more fuel due to increased rolling resistance. Research by Natural Resources Canada, for example, has found that the average Canadian motorist wastes about two weeks worth of fuel a year due to tire under-inflation. Depending on your driving habits, the price tag for this wasted fuel can add up to hundreds of dollars.

Here is the monthly four-step approach to proper tire inflation recommended by tire makers as part of the industry's *Be Tire Smart* campaign to advance road safety, environmental protection and fuel economy:

- Find the recommended inflation pressure for your tires. It will be listed on the vehicle placard most commonly located on the inside post of one of the doors, in the glove compartment or on the fuel door. If you cannot find your vehicle's placard, consult your owner's manual.
- Remember to only measure pressure when your tires are cold. If you have been driving, wait three hours before measuring tire pressure.
- Use only a reliable tire gauge. Remove the cap from the valve stem, press the tire gauge onto the valve and take the pressure reading.

- Add air until the recommended air pressure is achieved. If you overfill the tire, release air by pushing on the metal stem in the centre of the valve, then re-measure the pressure.

Too many drivers think a visual check will tell them if their tire pressures are correct. A tire can be under-inflated by 20 percent or more and not look noticeably different. The only accurate way to measure a tire's air pressure is with a reliable gauge, which can be purchased for a few dollars.

Another common mistake is assuming that the maximum pressure stamped on the tire's sidewall is right for everyday driving. That inflation level refers to the maximum inflation pressure the tire can contain under maximum load and is not the vehicle manufacturer's recommended air pressure for normal driving conditions. Always use the air pressure stipulated by the vehicle placard.

"Proper tire inflation, coupled with regular tire maintenance, helps protect your family," says Maidment. "Regular inflation checks will also prolong the life of your tires, cut your fuel bills and reduce harmful emissions. Monitoring and, if necessary, adjusting your tire inflation levels each month is a smart play no matter how you look at it."

To learn more about proper tire maintenance, visit the *Be Tire Smart – Play your P.A.R.T.* website at [www.betiresmart.ca](http://www.betiresmart.ca).

*Be Tire Smart – Play Your P.A.R.T.* is an advocacy campaign designed to educate the motoring public about the benefits of proper tire inflation and maintenance. The campaign is a joint initiative of the Rubber Association of Canada, which represents the tire industry, and Natural Resources Canada's Office of Energy Efficiency.