

Put snow tires on early

Going to wait until the snow flies before you put snow tires on the car this year? Read what a couple of tire dealers had to say about their business during the first heavy snowfall last year:

"It's crazy. It's nuts. There are people all over the place."

"It's been chaotic around here during the last few days. Many people procrastinate about buying snow tires until the snow actually falls—and then watch out."

"We hope that will help to convince you to make early preparations for winter driving," said Jack B. Scarcliff, director of consumer affairs for The Firestone Tire & Rubber Company. With winter weather only a few flips of the calendar away, Scarcliff offered some basic questions and answers on snow tires as a guide to motorists:



For most of us in snow belt areas, winter means time for snow tires. Have snow tires mounted early enough to save yourself the aggravation of long lines and long waits when the snow flies. And remember that frequent tire air pressure checks are needed during the winter as well as during warmer months. A tire loses one pound of pressure for every 10-degree drop in temperature.

than bias-ply tires, as well as different ride characteristics, and it is important for proper car handling to avoid mixing tires of substantially different handling characteristics.

Q. Should separate wheels be purchased for snow tires?

A. It's a good idea so they can remain mounted during storage. It also saves on mounting fees and reduces the possibility of damage that could result from twice-yearly switching. And if you're a do-it-yourselfer, you can switch tires in your

driveway, a job that takes only a few minutes.

Remember when storing mounted tires that the air pressure should be reduced 10 to 15 pounds, and that mounted or unmounted, tires should be stored in a cool dry place away from direct sunlight.

Q. When is the best time to put on snow tires?

A. It depends on the geographical area of the country, but early November is a good rule of thumb. Just be sure to beat the first snowfall to avoid the rush to tire dealers and service stations.

Also, when snow tires are put on or taken off, the regular tires should be rotated for balanced wear.

If snow tires are put on in rather warm weather, motorists should check the air pressure when it gets colder because a tire loses about one pound of air pressure for every 10-degree drop in temperature.

Q. What about radial tires? Don't they provide enough traction so that I don't need snow tires?

A. Because of their generally more aggressive tread designs, ordinary radial tires provide somewhat better traction than their non-radial counterparts on packed or shallow snow, but in deep snow only a winter snow tire will do the job. If you needed snow tires before switching to radial tires, you'll probably continue to need them.

In addition, if you have radial tires on the front, be sure to put radial snow tires on the rear axle. Radials have a quicker steering response

Q. Can snow tires be rotated?

A. Non-radial snow tires can be rotated to the opposite wheel position, but it is not recommended that radial snow tires be rotated because they may not perform as well if the direction of travel is reversed. To prevent this from happening, have the tires marked with chalk to show their respective positions.

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