

“Our Work Shows Pride, With Safety As Our Guide”

Tire Safety – A Lot of Work is Riding on It

A sometimes overlooked object on any piece of equipment is the tires. If you spend any-time, as I do, driving up and down the interstate highways you probably have noticed the increase in the frequency of “road alligators” since the weather warmed up. These are those chunks of tire that have blown off of tractor-trailer rigs and lay about the roadway waiting to bite you if you are not careful. I am no tire expert so I always wonder if better tire maintenance would decrease the number of “road alligators”. I figure that the lack of tire maintenance is a major contributor.

In construction and mining, we work with and around rubber-wheeled equipment all the time and usually don’t experience any major problems. Don’t forget that your tires are the only point of contact between the equipment or vehicle and the ground or roadway. Properly maintained tires improve the steering, stopping, traction and load-carrying capability of your vehicle or equipment.

Studies of tire safety show that maintaining proper tire pressure, observing tire and vehicle load limits, avoiding road hazards, and inspecting tires for cuts, slashes or other irregularities are the most important things you can do to avoid tire failure. Tire failure could take the form of tread separation, blowouts and flat tires. Where do you suppose those road alligators fit into this picture?

Here are some safety tips for proper tire inspection:

- Inspect tires at least daily – thumping of the sidewalls with a bar will tell you if the tire is inflated.
- Tire pressure should be checked at least once a month. This should be done when the tire is “cold”, meaning the tire has not been driven on for at least three hours. This pressure check must be done with a proper tire pressure gauge. Inflate the tire to the manufacturer’s recommendation.
- If the tire is found to be lacking air, it must be inflated prior to use. Improper tire pressure can lead to the tread quickly wearing down or unevenly, making the tire less effective in stopping or turning.
- Inspect sidewalls of tires for gouges, cuts, cracks, bulges, uneven wear and embedded objects. If you notice any of these things, inform your supervisor immediately.
- Check tire tread depth. This should be done at the same time as the pressure. In general, tires are not safe and should be replaced when the tread is worn down to 1/8 of an inch. (Rusty actually replaces ready-mix truck tires before this) Some tires have built-in treadware indicators that indicate when the tire is worn and needs to be replaced or capped.
- Make sure the tire is properly balanced. This adjustment maximizes the life of your tires and prevents your vehicle from veering to the right or left when driving on a straight level road

Use these safety tips for proper tire maintenance and it may save your life and at a minimum will extend the life of your tires.

A True Story! And you thought you were having a bad day! A man was working on his motorcycle on the patio, his wife nearby in the kitchen. While racing the engine, the motorcycle accidentally slipped into gear. The man, still holding onto the handlebars, was dragged along as it burst through the glass patio doors.

His wife, hearing the crash, ran in the room to find her husband cut and bleeding, the motorcycle, and the shattered patio door. She called for an ambulance. Because the house sat on a large hill, she went down the several flights of stairs to meet the paramedics to escort them to her husband.

While the attendants were loading her husband, the wife managed to right the motorcycle to push it outside. She also blotted up spilled gasoline with paper towels and tossed them into the toilet.

After being treated and released, the man returned home, looked at the shattered patio door and the damage done to his motorcycle. He went into the bathroom and consoled himself with a cigarette while attending to his business. About to stand, he flipped the butt between his legs.

The wife, who was in the kitchen, heard a loud explosion and her husband screaming. Finding him lying on the bathroom floor with his trousers blown away and burns on his buttocks, legs and groin, she once again phoned for an ambulance. The same paramedic crew was dispatched.

As the paramedics carried the man down the stairs to the ambulance they asked the wife how he had come to burn himself. She told them. They started laughing so hard, one slipped, the stretcher jerked dumping the husband out. He fell down the remaining stairs, breaking his arm.

