

CARING FOR YOUR TIRES

Proper tire care is a common topic of discussion among RV owners. Last month we talked about the use of blocks under your tires to help level your motor homes. The following excerpts from the Michelin on-line Tire Guide address additional aspects of caring for your tires.

Aging, Weather Checking and Ozone Cracking

During the pre-trip inspection, be sure to check your tires for signs of aging, weather checking, and/or ozone cracking. These show up as tiny cracks in the rubber surface on the sidewall of the tire. If the cracks are less than 1/32" deep, the tire is fine to run. Between 1/32" and 2/32", the tire is suspect and should be examined by your Michelin dealer. If the cracks are any deeper than 2/32", the tire should be replaced immediately.

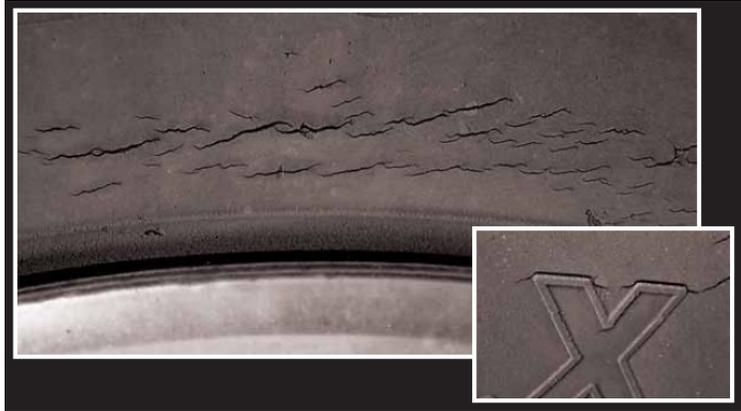
Here are a few tips to help you protect your tires from these common damage conditions:

1. Keep your tires properly inflated.
2. Keep your tires clean.
3. Avoid prolonged exposure to heat, cold or moisture.
4. Avoid prolonged exposure to ultraviolet rays.
5. Cover your tires when your vehicle is not in use.
6. Do not park near electric generators or transformers.
7. Do not store your vehicle in an area where welding is being done or in a garage that has mercury vapor lamps.

Long Term Storage and RV Tires

Unless you're a full-time Rver, your vehicle probably spends some time in long-term storage. But what you probably didn't know is that rubber tires age when not being used. So, if you must store your RV, a cool, dry, sealed garage is your best bet. Also, some storage surfaces can cause tires to age faster. That's why Michelin recommends placing a barrier (cardboard, plastic or plywood) between your tire and the storage surface. Here are some other steps you can take to help reduce the aging effects from long-term storage:

1. Thoroughly clean tires with soap and water before placing into storage.



2. Cover tires to block direct sunlight and ultraviolet rays.
3. Store out of a high ozone area.

Note: When a vehicle is stored, tires should be inflated to the inflation pressure indicated on the sidewall.

Before removing your vehicle from storage, thoroughly inspect each tire-this includes sidewalls, tread area, and air pressure. If your tires have lost air, be sure to inflate them to the correct pressure before driving.

Proper Cleaning of Your RV's Tires

Like the rest of your RV, it pays to keep your Michelin tires clean. Road oil will cause deterioration of the rubber and dirt buildup will hold the contaminants next to the tire.

As with the cleaning of any rubber product, proper cleaning methods must be used to obtain the maximum years of service from your tires. A soft brush and the normal mild soap that you would use to clean your RV may be used. If you use a dressing product to "protect" your tires from aging, use extra care and caution. Tire dressings that contain petroleum products, alcohol or silicones will cause deterioration or cracking and accelerate the aging process.

In many cases, it is not the dressing itself that can be a problem, but rather the chemical reaction that the product can have with the antioxidant in the tire. Heat can add to the negative reaction. When these same dressing products are used on a passenger car tire that is replaced every three to four years, it is rare to see a major problem. However, in most cases, RV tires may last much longer due to limited annual mileage and the chemical reactions have much longer to take place.

Additional Tire Care Recommendations

Tire repair: Even the best drivers can drive over a nail and the best tires can pick up that nail or screw and go flat. If you pick up an object that causes a flat with a Michelin RV tire, the repair must be made to the inside of the tire to be repaired properly. To do this, the tire needs to be demounted and inspected on the inside of the casing for any other damage that the object may have caused. See your Michelin truck tire dealer for the proper repair and damage inspection.

Tire inspection: Your RV tires should be inspected thoroughly at least once a year, and any time you drive in rough or rocky terrain, or when you have your RV serviced. This inspection should include both sidewalls, the tread area, and the valves, caps and any valve extensions. Inspect for nails, cuts, bulges, aging or fatigue cracks and weather or ozone checking. Also,

check between the duals for objects lodged between them. See your Michelin dealer at once if anything unusual is observed.

On a regular basis, rub the palm of your hand across the face of the tread on your front tires to feel for any feathered wear from "toe" alignment problems. NOTE: Be careful since severe weather can expose steel belt edges that are very sharp. A "toe" misalignment problem can be caused by impact with a "chuck" hole in the road. Bad "toe" wear can be hard to find visually, but can be felt very quickly with the hand. This type of alignment problem can wear rubber off the tread of your tires in just a few hundred miles.