

# Don't get stuffed by latest tyres scam

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Motorists in Kenya are being warned that significant numbers of imported tyres have been “stuff-packed” for shipping. PHOTO | PETER WARUTUMO

## In Summary

- Do not purchase a tyre that has any distortion in its shape, no matter how good the price, how good the tread and no matter what the salesman promises about its return to shape when it is mounted and inflated.
- That will obscure the damage, but it won't cure it.
- Your best safeguards are to take a look at the tyre(s) you buy before they are mounted or inflated, and do your shopping at reputable stores.

Motorists in Kenya are being warned that significant numbers of imported tyres have been “stuff-packed” for shipping.

This means a small tyre is squeezed and

rammed inside a slightly larger tyre, and that pair is then forced into an even bigger one.

This practice saves space and reduces shipping costs, and can also “hide” the actual number of tyres in a container.

But the stuffing process requires considerable mechanical force that crumples and distorts all the tyres involved far beyond their design limits, causing invisible but potentially severe damage to the tyre casings (e.g. kinking the tyre beading and tearing fabrics in the ply).

So beware bargain prices if there is any chance that costs have been cut in this way.

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You should also have a new tyre professionally “balanced” – and be curious if a large number of counterweights is required to make the tyre run true.

While on this wavelength, you should be aware that even tyres that have been separately packed and customs-checked can be damaged during use, and regularly check the integrity of the casing (not just the depth of the tread!).

The most common damage is a puncture.

If this is caused by a thorn or a nail piercing the tread, the “hole” can be fully and safely fixed. However, if the hole (even a small one) is in the shoulder or the sidewall of the tyre (especially a tubeless tyre) even a good repair might be less secure.

The shoulder and wall use much thinner material than the tread, and they flex a lot more...with every rotation of the tyre (several hundred times per kilometre).

Best practice in this instance is to fit a “gaiter patch” on the inside wall of the tyre to cover the hole. Some repairers can vulcanise the area.

Great, if they are good at it; dangerous if they are not. But if the “puncture” - on any part of any type of tyre – is not a small hole but a gash, any attempt to repair or reuse the tyre should be in emergency circumstances only (to avoid being stranded in an unsafe place). In strict principle, a gashed tyre should be unequivocally destroyed.

A gash doesn’t just pierce the airtightness of the rubber; it cuts the structure of the casing and greatly increases the chance of unpredictable failure (blow out).

Casing damage, even when there is no cut, can also be revealed by any asymmetric “bulge” in the tyre wall (a bit like a blister), or, if the damage is in the tread the circumference of the tyre will be “out of round” – usually causing a wobble or vibration.

Whatever the cause (usually hitting a stone or kerb with force) such bulges show that part of the casing structure has been weakened, and the chance of sudden casing failure is dramatically increased.

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