**TYRES**

SPOTLIGHT The right choice

Choosing the right tyre to suit your car and driving style is the most cost effective way to improve the performance of your vehicle. Your safety and driving enjoyment over the next years and thousands of kilometre will be determined by this decision. Here is a guide to help you take the correct decision and make it just a little bit easier

**Choosing the number** When the time comes for you to change your tyres the very first thing that you need to decide is how many tyres you really need. Since tyres affect the performance of your vehicle, all four tyres should be as identical as possible or handling problems may arise. Because of this, the only time that you will be required to change a single tyre is if your other tyres have a lot of remaining tread depth and the one you need to replace has been damaged by an accident, road hazard or a vandal. Even then you should replace it with a tyre that exactly matches the others. Select a replacement tyre of the same brand, size and speed rating.

In most cases you will need to change tyres because they have worn out. In such situations, if two of your tyres have a lot of remaining tread depth, but you need to replace the other two, you should replace them with a pair of tyres that come as close as possible to matching your existing tyres. While identical new tyres are desirable, others of the same size and type can also provide good results. Only consider selecting new tyres that are from the same tyre category as your existing tyres. Also, new tyres should be installed on the rear axle.

If one pair of tyres have worn faster than the others, it is advisable to ask your mechanic why this has occurred. Was it caused by a lack of tyre rotation, out-of-spec wheel alignment or loose mechanical parts? Once the problem has been found, it can be corrected before it damages your new set. Keep in mind that your ultimate goal is that all of your tyres always wear out at the same time so they can be replaced as a set. If all of your tyres are wearing out together, you have the greatest flexibility in tyre selection. If you were happy with the original tyres, simply replace them. If you want longer treadwear, a smoother ride or more handling, there are probably tyres that will help you accomplish that. A little bit of online research will go a long way in helping you decide on just the right tyre to suit your needs.

**The size matters**When you have finally decided on the tyre that you want fitted to your vehicle, the next most important ting is choosing the correct size. A tyre’s first requirement is that it must be able to carry the weight of your vehicle. No matter how good a tyre you select, if its capabilities are “overworked” just carrying the load, it will have little reserve capacity to help your vehicle respond quickly in an emergency. So when you are in the selection process, make certain that your new tyre’s size is designed to carry the weight of your vehicle! Don’t undersize.

The other size consideration is overall tyre diameter. Since many of the functions of today’s vehicles are highly computerized, maintaining accurate speed data going into the computer assures accurate instructions coming out. And an important part of the speed equation is your tyre’s overall tyre diameter. For cars and vans, staying within a three per cent diameter change is desirable. Pick-ups and sport utility vehicles (SUVs) are usually engineered to handle up to a 15 per cent oversize tyre.

**Driving conditions**The next important step is analysing the conditions that you will be using the vehicle in be it sunshine, rain or snow, though the latter is not something that we can consider here in Oman but should prove useful if you plan on heading to a country where it is relevant. This analysis should be taken a step further when deciding on tyres for SUV’s, especially if you plan on taking your vehicle off-road.

If you live in an area where you face an extreme change in weather it is advisable to have more than one set of tyres and wheels (for example, summer tyres in summer and snow tyres in winter). This also allows you to quite easily select tyres that exactly meet your diverse needs. On the other hand if you decide to use one set of tyres for every season, you may get good performance under many conditions, but your vehicle’s performance will be compromised when the conditions are at their worst.

When it comes to SUVs that you will be taking off road, the important thing to do is to select your tyres so that they match the typical off-road driving conditions you expect to encounter. It is advisable to check with your local tyre dealership for the best tyres to suit your conditions or even a little bit of online research will go a long way in making the right choice.

On the other hand, if you only drive around your neighbourhood almost any tyre will do. But if you drive your vehicle on congested city streets and expressways during rush hour you will be better served by more responsive tyres. If you drive extensively on high ways and consistently travel long distances, you will want quiet, smooth riding, long wearing tyres. Or if you like to drive quickly on twisting roads or through the mountains you will want good handling tyres. And if you drive on the track or in autocross events, you will want the best competition tyres available. So in conclusion, if your worst driving conditions and your typical conditions are similar, one set of tyres will be all you need. If you live at the edge of the snowbelt and infrequently get snow you may want to select an all-season tyre. If your SUV is used as the family’s station wagon and driven on the road all of the time, overly aggressive light truck tyres aren’t for you.

If your worst driving condition occurs frequently and is dissimilar to your typical driving condition, you may want to consider selecting two sets of tyres for your vehicle. Each set will be designed to master the specific conditions without compromising your driving satisfaction at the extremes. While purchasing two sets of tyres may appear expensive, the set you’re not using won’t wear while you are using the other set, and combined they’ll provide longer total wear than either set could individually.

**Fitting to the budget**And finally, the most important consideration that you will have to make is deciding on a tyre that fits your budget. Buying good tyres is never cheap and sometimes when you are selecting new tyres and find one that is perfect, although more expensive than another tyre that appears to be a close second, what can you do? The answer is quite simple – consider evaluating your situation by comparing ‘how much per km’ each tyre will cost. If you plan to drive your vehicle another 40,000 kms and are considering the ‘perfect’ tyres at 50 rials each, and the other at 45 rials each; you may be surprised to find out that the cost of the ‘perfect’ set costs just 1.25 baisas per km while the close set costs 1.13 baisas per km. so the question you will have to answer is “will saving the 20 rials today make up for not having selected the perfect tyre’ that you will be driving on for the next two years?

Tyre Care by Yokohama

With summer round the corner, it is advisable to be pro-active and check the condition of your tyres, lest it gets too late and you’re left stranded on the road with a burst tyre. Before we get down to the nitty gritties, lets understand what the sidewall markings on tyres denote.

**Side wall markings on a tyre**

**P215/65R15 89H**

**P:** A tyre meant for Passenger Cars

**215:** Nominal width of tyre, in this case 215mm

**65:** Aspect ratio = 65% of 215 = 139.75mm is the side wall height

**R:** Implies this is a radial tyre, 15: Rim diameter in inches

**89:** Load Index, which corresponds to 580kg is the load bearing capacity

**H:** Speed rating, corresponds to a max speed of 210km/hr

Tyre maintenance

Any tyre, no matter how well constructed, may fail in use as a result of punctures, impact damage, improper inflation or other conditions resulting from use. Tyre failures may result in damage to the vehicle or personal injury. To minimise the risk of tyre failure, we strongly recommend the following:

**Inflation pressure –** Tyre pressure including the spare, should be checked at least once a month before driving, when the tyres are cold. Maintaining the recommended tyre pressure provides proper sidewall deflection and safe operating temperatures for the tyres. It is also very important to tyre life, safety and vehicle handling. Under inflation creates excessive heat; lower load carrying capacity and can seriously reduce tyre life. Irregular wear can also be caused by under or over inflation. Use dust caps on valves to maintain an airtight seal while keeping dust and moisture out.

**Tyre rotation for passenger cars -** The purpose of rotating tyres is to achieve a more uniform tyre wear for all tyres on a vehicle. Before rotating tyres, determine the cause of any unusual wear and correct any mis-alignment, imbalance or other mechanical problems. First rotation should be done after the 5,000 to 7,500 km and every subsequent rotation, after every 10,000 km. Do not mix radials and bias ply tyres on the same axle. Temporary spare tyres cannot be rotated as shown above. Do not mix or rotate different speed rated tyres.

**Wheel alignment and balancing –** These are very important considerations for deriving safety and maximum mileage from your tyres, Check how your tyres are wearing out at least once a month. If your tyres are wearing out unevenly, such as the inside shoulder is wearing out faster than the rest of the tread, your car may be out of alignment. This condition not only reduces the life of your tyre but also adversely affects the handling characteristics of your car, which could be dangerous. An imbalanced tyre and rim assembly may also be a cause of vibration at certain speeds. Prolonged use of the tyres in such a condition can lead to tyre damage.

**Tyre Replacement -** There are Tread Wear Indicators (TWI) on the sidewall of your tyre. These indicators are at a depth of 1.6mm. When the tread of your tyre gets worn out due to use and comes down to the level of these indicators, it is an indication to replace your tyre. When your tyre gets damaged due to side wall cuts, tread cuts, damaged beads etc, it is again time to replace the tyre. When replacing your tyres, it is best advised to stick to the specifications as laid down by the car manufacturer. Filling your tyres with nitrogen would be a good idea as this will keep your tyres cool and at the same time keep the air pressure constant for months together.

Feel free to drop into any of our Tyre service centres, to have your tyres checked.