

Heed These Wet Weather Driving Tips

(NAPSA)—Whether it's from melting snow, spring showers or a summer downpour, standing water on roadways can pose a hazard. Drivers should take care to heed these wet weather driving tips.

Mac Demere, a Michelin test driver and former race car driver, reminds motorists to:

- Make sure tires have adequate tread depth, and
- Make sure tires are properly inflated.

Demere's advice is based on recent tests conducted at Michelin's proving grounds in Laurens, S.C., where photos from a high-speed, underground camera showed the effect water and speed have on worn tires. The researchers created a "puddle" of water 3/16ths-of-an-inch deep and ran a vehicle through it at speeds of 60 mph and 30 mph. The tests were conducted with the tires set at 35 psi, the recommended pressure for the test vehicle. Then the test was repeated with tires under-inflated at 30 psi and 25 psi. The tires were worn about 50 percent.

With the tires inflated to 35 psi and the car driven at 60 mph, the tread showed sufficient contact with the road. At the same speed and with tire pressure set five psi lower than the recommended pressure, testing showed nearly the entire tread lost contact with the road. When the pressure was set at 25 psi, testing showed only the shoulders, or sides, of the tire tread were touching the road.

"At that point, the tire is hydroplaning," Demere said. "Your car is riding on a wake of water, just

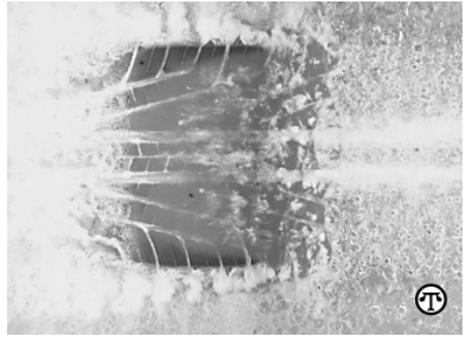


Photo credit: Michelin

A tire under-inflated by 10 psi may lose total contact with the road when going through water at highway speeds. This photo, taken with a special camera under glass, shows only the sides of the tire tread touch the road.

like a surfboard on a wave. And no amount of shifting your body weight is going to control its direction."

A worn tire magnifies the dangerous effects standing water can have on a tire's ability to maintain traction. Demere's suggestion is that drivers replace worn tires before the rainy season and certainly when they are extensively worn.

"Most state regulations say you must change your tires when the tread is worn to 2/32nds-of-an-inch, but our tests show that even at 4/32nds-of-an-inch depth, the tire's ability to channel water has been significantly reduced, compared to when it was new," he said. "When shopping, you'll want to consider a wet-weather tire like the Michelin® HydroEdge™. Its design maximizes hydroplaning resistance by minimizing water flow turbulence, while optimizing traction in dry conditions."