

## **A LOT IS RIDING ON YOUR VEHICLE'S TIRES**

The wave of tire failures and recalls linked to fatal accidents in recent years has directed attention to the importance of maintaining proper air pressure in your vehicle's tires. In addition to making your vehicle safer, maintaining correct tire pressure also saves you money by improving your vehicle's fuel mileage and handling while reducing tire wear. In spite of these facts, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) estimates that one in four passenger cars has at least one under-inflated tire. For sport utility and light trucks, this statistic jumps to one in every three vehicles.

All tires naturally lose air over time or more quickly if driven over a pothole or bumped into a curb; therefore it's important to check tire pressure at least once a month. The only proper way to check pressure is with a tire pressure gauge. A visual exam is not sufficient - many tires appear safe, even when they are under-inflated.

Look for tire information labels attached to your vehicle's door edge, the doorpost, inside the glove box door or under the trunk lid. These labels will include the recommended tire size and tire pressure for your vehicle. The proper tire inflation pressure will be shown as a number of pounds per square inch (PSI).

Air pressure rises as your tires get warmer, but the manufacturer recommended air pressure for your tires is based on when they are cold. To ensure an accurate reading, you should check the pressure when the vehicle has not been driven for at least three hours.

If you are driving and think that a tire is under-inflated, fill it to the recommended cold inflation pressure. While it may still be slightly under-inflated, it is safer to drive with air pressure that is just below recommendation than to drive with a significantly under-inflated tire. Remember, this is only a temporary solution, so recheck and adjust the tire's pressure when you can obtain an accurate cold reading.

The tire and vehicle makers are currently putting new technologies in place to help motorists maintain proper tire pressure. By November 2003, vehicle makers will be installing tire pressure monitors to alert drivers when a tire is under-inflated. NHTSA is letting vehicle makers decide which of two tire pressure-monitoring systems to install. One option is a direct system, which has sensors located in each wheel to measure the

pressure of each tire. A less expensive alternative is a system that works with the vehicle's anti-lock braking system, alerting the driver that a tire is under-inflated but not specifying which one.

Another technology that may become more prevalent is run-flat tires, which are now available on various higher-end vehicles. These specially designed tires can support the weight of the vehicle even when deflated, such as when they are punctured. But because these tires don't appear "flat" even when air pressure is low, checking the air pressure regularly is critical. These tires also require special equipment and procedures for removal, installation or repair.

Recent tire concerns and resulting technology also point to the importance of having your vehicle repaired after an accident by a collision repair business that understands how tire condition and pressure, tire and wheel alignment, and proper unibody or frame repair work together to keep you safe on the road.

Many insurance companies and collision repair associations recommend you look for a collision repair business that has earned the I-CAR® Gold Class Professionals® designation, which indicates that a collision repair business' employees have completed a substantial amount of leading edge collision industry training. I-CAR, the Inter-Industry Conference on Auto Collision Repair, a not-for-profit organization, established the Gold Class Professionals designation to help consumers identify collision repair businesses that are committed to ongoing collision training. The training provided by I-CAR and members of the Industry Training Alliance™, formed by I-CAR, covers virtually every step of the repair process, including analyzing the damage, structural repair processes, corrosion protection, steel and aluminum welding, matching your vehicle's paint finish, and checking safety features such as airbag deployment, seatbelts and anti-lock braking systems.

For the location of a Gold Class Professionals collision repair business near you, call 800.422.7872 or visit their Website at [www.i-car.com](http://www.i-car.com).