

Cheap Tires... going, going, gone!

Winter Tire Tips

Tires prices are going up due to a 35% tariff placed on tires imported from China recently by the Obama administration. Other tire makers are raising prices too. "Tireco Inc, in an effort to stave off a run on its inventory, raised prices 28%, and will modify the raise as the market shakes out."

So who needs snow tires? If you spend most of the winter in the city, ordinarily you wouldn't need to be concerned with snow tires but so far our weather's been wet and forecasting above normal cold/snow for the Rocky Mountain region. During the December 20, 2006 storms, snow tires were mostly sold out within a month. With this year's higher prices the less expensive tires will go quickly. If you ski or even go to the mountains in winter, snow tires are a must for your safety and pocketbook. One accident, even a fender bender, can cost you plenty in a deductible, car rental and time.

There are four variations of snow tires; all season tires, snow tires, studded snow tires and ice tires. All have advantages and disadvantages.

All Season Tires

Advantages: They can be left on the car year round. They are better in snow than highway tires but not a whole lot better.

Disadvantages: They aren't as good on dry pavement as a highway tires and aren't as good in snow as snow tires.



Snow Tires

Advantages: They grip very well in fresh snow and better than all season tires in packed snow. They last longer than ice tires.

Disadvantages: They should be changed out in the summer, they don't do well on ice and if you sell your car you usually cannot use them on your next car.



Studded Snow Tires

Advantages: Studded tires do very well on snow, packed snow and ice.

Disadvantages: When the pavement is dry they are very noisy and damage streets. In some states they are illegal or can only be used in certain months. The cost of studding adds about \$15 per tire.



Ice Tires

Ice tires give traction nearly as good as studded snow tires in all conditions. Each tread block has about 12 sipes or cuts in it, in effect giving each tread block 12 edges to grip with. Ice tires aren't noisy like studded snow tires but they should be taken off after the snow season. Part of the reason they have such good traction is they are made of a soft rubber compound but this also causes them to wear out somewhat sooner.



Some tire stores will sipe or cut regular tires and the current charge to sipe is around \$13 per tire but if you're going to spend extra why not get the ones that were engineered for ice to begin with?

Bottom Line

Make sure your tires have good tread.

If your tires are worn, now is the time to have them replaced.