

TYRE TALK - Part 3

So Which To Use

By Gary Bexley

This comes down to two things - assuming the size is locked in. Design / type and Brand. However, as normal, there are exceptions. Not all sizes are available in the different types and brands. For example, the tyres on a very modern vehicle (asymmetrical) probably won't be made in the old original style (non-directional). That would not be an issue here in NZ as the old type is still good for over 150 kph but in Europe you may want a tyre designed to run up to 300 kph.

Design / Type. There are three common types plus "others" each with their own advantages / disadvantages.

1. Non-directional / standard was the norm for many years but has become less common as vehicle performance / handling has increased. They are still the choice of high volume, lower performance entry level vehicles because they are made to a price and don't have the demands of an F Type placed on them. They can be identified by looking at the tread pattern. One half of the tread is the exact same mirror image as the other and has several advantages:

a. They can easily be changed from side to side.

b. If wearing unevenly can be turned on the rim and put back on to even up and extract the most mileage.

c. Often the same tyre as the spare wheel which can be brought into use in order to maximise the life of the set.

d. Rotating the wheels is easy as the tread depth of an axle set can be matched in order to maintain balance and grip. Disadvantages are few (in NZ) as the modern standard tyre can run up to 200 kph but certainly don't perform as well under high speed in the wet or under high cornering loads as the newer generations do.



2. Directional tyres can be identified by a distinctive “V” pattern much the same as a rear tractor tyre. This is designed for traction (like a tractor) and to shed water at high speed. They also have an arrow with the word’s “rotation” or “direction” underneath on the sidewall to show which side of the vehicle it is to be fitted when moving forward.

Advantages; a. Traction.

b. Sure footed in deep water / higher speed.

c. Uneven wear can be compensated by turning on the rim but it then has to be fitted to the other side which means that that tyre has also to be spun as well, which is normally required anyway.

d. Rotations are normally just front to rear.

Disadvantages; a. bit more work / expense required to maintain even wear.

b. Can be a bit noisier as the pattern tends to be more open and “luggy”.

c. Punctures need to be dealt with promptly as the spare is normally a “space saver” and limited to 80 kph.

3. Asymmetrical tyres can be identified by the tread where one half is different to the other. They also have the word “Outside” on one sidewall and “Inside” on the other. This means the tyre can only be fitted one way. This type is sort of a combination of the above two.

Advantages;

a. Good traction.

b. Generally quieter

running. . It has a very

strong outside shoulder

for high cornering loads with plenty of rubber on the road for grip yet can cope with a lot of water.

Disadvantages; a. Cannot be turned on the rim to compensate for uneven tread wear.

b. Punctures need to be dealt with as before.

4. Others; a. Light truck for higher loads – i.e. Utes, trailers, campers etc.

b. Snow and ice – not very common here in NZ.



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c. Directional asymmetric – very specialist and expensive as they come as a pair (left and right hand).

d. Run flats – are available in all types but in my opinion are not much chop. They are harsh riding because of the stiff sidewall. It has to be strong in order to take the weight of the vehicle without air pressure to support it and, therefore, no cushion effect.

The “Tyre Panda” type inflator supplied to pump up the punctured tyre is OK if a nail is the cause of the leak but absolutely useless if the tyre is destroyed by a pot hole, curb etc. (quite common). I would urge all those without a spare wheel to source and carry a suitable space saver. Murphy's Law states you will need one on a wet weekend when in the province's miles from anywhere and help! These tyres would not normally be stocked in the smaller shops out of town and you would be forced to wait several days for a replacement to be available. At least a “space saver” will keep you moving, even if it is only 80 kph. I have done 100 kph on mine but not around corners in the wet!

e. Space savers – have their place but must be pumped up to 60psi. as they are only half the size of a normal tyre therefore require twice the pressure. Most that I have seen are very flat as they are never checked. Even at 30 psi. that is the same as a normal tyre at 0 psi. !!

Brands; Don't be too concerned about an unknown brand as all tyres have to be made to a worldwide industry standard and are, therefore, fit for purpose – especially for our speed limits. In some respects, it's more important to work with a supplier that you can trust and will look after you. Tell him what you want / expect and go with his recommendation. Then, if they don't deliver, you can go back and challenge them. For me if a customer came back, I appreciated the feedback and put it right. Some manufactures deliberately avoid the OE market and focus on producing a product of good performance / value rather than down to a price in an effort to gain a big order. E.g.; Falken from Japan – particularly high performance and Cooper from USA – particularly 4 x4. In some instances, the Country of origin is more of a concern. I've seen Michelin and Pirelli, for example, from Slovakia, Venezuela, Mexico etc with issues at times. For me tyres from Japan and South Korea are fine as are those from a major brand made under licence in China. Other brands from Japan are Toyo and Yokohama and work well. From Korea, those fitted as OE to Hyundai, Kia etc are also fine. e.g. Hankook, Kumho and Nexen.

As you can see there is no easy answer as to which to use as we are all different and have different expectations. That's why I say the hardest thing to do with tyres is to decide exactly what you expect from them and to convey that to your supplier.

Remember: check your spare tyre pressure. Safe motoring

Gary