

DID YOU KNOW???

WINTER TIRES – WHAT ARE YOU DRIVING ON?

As winter driving has now arrived, are you prepared for the inevitable slippery roads? Do you know what the difference between winter snow tires, all-weather tires, and all-season tires is? Are you aware of the differences in these tires?

An interesting article from Consumer Reports helps educate us about what tires we should use in winter. According to a number of studies and surveys, including Consumer Reports' own tests, if you live in an area where snow is a constant throughout winter, having dedicated winter/snow tires can improve your safety.

More than half of Canadian drivers install winter/snow tires on their cars, and they see a real benefit. There are fewer winter-related accidents, injuries, and deaths when cars are required to be fitted with winter/snow tires, a Quebec-based study found. And the most recent survey report from the Tire and Rubber Association of Canada suggests that two-thirds of Canadian drivers are using winter/snow tires (required in some provinces, including Quebec). Visitors to Quebec are not required to have snow tires.

In the U.S., the use of winter/snow tires is much lower among snow-belt drivers. Just two in five American motorists use winter/snow tires, according to a new survey commissioned by Michelin. The Michelin survey, which focused on the U.S., also found:

- 67 percent of respondents thought they didn't need winter tires because they had all-season tires. Consumer Reports' testing clearly shows that most winter/snow tires have better snow traction than the average all-season tires.
- 53 percent thought winter/snow tires weren't needed if they had an all-wheel-drive vehicle. But Consumer Reports subscribers consider winter/snow tires to be beneficial whether they have a two-wheel-drive or an all-wheel-drive car or SUV.
- Michelin found that three out of four drivers are nervous about driving in snow, with younger drivers more concerned than older drivers.
- The survey showed that a vast majority of drivers avoid, limit, or change plans because they don't want to drive in wintry weather. Drivers are worried about the "other guy" on the road, losing control, or getting stuck. Ultimately, staying off the road is the best way to improve safety in foul weather.
- Most drivers using winter/snow tires are more confident and less concerned about other drivers and the loss of traction.

However, all-weather tires—a variation of all-season tires designed to excel in tough winter conditions—can be a convenient option if you want to avoid switching to winter/snow tires in the fall and replacing them in the spring. Consumer Reports' snow-traction testing of 64 car tire models found that the best all-weather tires rival traditional all-season tires in mild weather and can provide traction in severe snow and ice conditions.

All-weather tires don't quite match winter/snow tires for maximum snow traction and ice braking, but they do have an advantage in dry braking, wet braking, handling, and tread life. They can be a year-round convenience and ultimately reduce operating costs, making them an appealing choice for drivers who face winter weather but don't need to tackle the most severe conditions.