

How to Stretch Your Tire Budgets

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After attending the March MidAmerica Trucking Show in Louisville, Kentucky, it was obvious that the continued escalation in the prices of commercial truck tires have fleets very concerned about their tire budgets for 2012. Fleets are looking for ways to maximize tire removal miles and retreadability of the casing; and reducing tire related roadside service calls is critical to improving a tire budget. Of course, maximizing vehicle fuel economy is a goal of every fleet, both big and small, and one way to do that is to purchase low rolling resistant fuel efficient tires. On the EPA SmartWay website, there are over one hundred specific tire makes/models which are on the "verified" technology list to help improve fuel economy. To make the verified SmartWay list a tire must show a three percent or greater improvement in fuel economy.

If your fleet is currently averaging 6.0 miles/gallon with your current tire lineup and you switched to fuel efficient tires which had a three percent fuel economy improvement, your new miles/gallon would be 6.18. It does not sound like very much until you do the math which would show you just how much a year you could save in fuel costs.

Let's use the example of a ten-truck fleet in linehaul service averaging 100,000 miles per year per truck. At 6.0 mpg, each truck would consume 16,667 gallons of fuel per year. If the cost of diesel was only \$4.00 per gallon, the fuel bill per truck is \$66,667. But now through the purchase of fuel efficient tires, at 6.18 mpg, each truck would only consume 16,181 gallons of fuel per year. A savings of 486 gallons equates to a savings per year per truck of \$1944. For the entire fleet of ten trucks, you are looking at a yearly fuel savings of \$19,440. This sav-

ings will go a long way in offsetting the tire price premium of five to ten percent to purchase fuel efficient tires. So even though the tire budget will increase to purchase fuel efficient tires, the savings in the fuel bill will significantly help the overall costs in running your vehicles. All tire manufacturers offer low rolling resistant tires with a premium price tag – to get the most value from these more expensive tires, maintaining proper inflation is more important than ever.

The key to maximizing tire removal miles is to insure that your vehicles are in alignment and running at the correct pressure all the time. Driver morning vehicle walk-arounds are a great way to identify tire issues. It is an early warning system to minimize irregular wear and detect sidewall snags and finding punctures. Even though a vehicle may have a tire pressure monitoring or automatic tire inflation system that does not mean that you should not be inspecting your tires and checking them with a calibrated air pressure gauge on a regular basis. If a tire's air pressure is found to be twenty percent or more underinflated, that tire should be dismantled and thoroughly inspected to determine the cause of the low tire pressure.

Training your drivers about tires is great way to help keep your tire budgets in line. It is an ongoing training, not just the day the driver hires into your fleet.

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What is Tire Rolling Resistance?

