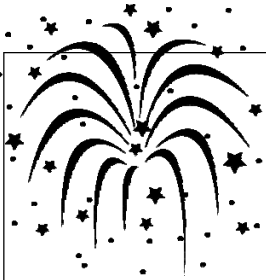


Evaluating Tire & Wheel Related Products/Systems at Your Fleet



PSI
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Having recently returned from the Mid America Truck Show with its more than 1000 vendors, I was again amazed at how many tire and wheel ancillary products are available. They include balancers, sealants, rim and wheel coatings, tire dressings, valve hardware, repair materials, fastener locking devices, repair materials, tire pressure monitors, and automatic tire inflation systems. An excellent source on how to evaluate these types of products at your fleet can be found in Recommended Practice RP-242 published by the Technology Maintenance Council of the American Trucking Association.

The first step in the process is to establish exactly what will be evaluated including the claimed feature and benefits of the product. The expected return on investment calculation is critical to see if the product makes sense from a financial standpoint. To determine ROI you will require purchase price, maintenance costs and disposal and/or recyclability costs. Then the second step is to establish how product performance is measured. Is it tire removal miles, cost per mile, reduction in tire related roadside service calls, improved fuel economy or simply less maintenance time?

The next step in the process is to work out the details for the specific field evaluation. This step takes the most time and needs to be well thought out. There is nothing worse than running a new product for a year or two and then discover that the proper data was not tracked and/or the sample size was so small that the driver effect far outweighed

the actual test results. From a statistical standpoint, the minimum sample size is thirty or more. In real world testing, products can fail, become lost, or involved in an accident. At the end of the test, the goal is to have a sample size of at least thirty of the control group and thirty of each test product. Make sure that the time frame of the test takes into account all the various weather conditions and geographies. Taking interim measurements during the test is very useful to insure that the product is really doing what it was designed to accomplish.

The fourth step in the process is to conduct the evaluation. Meeting first with your drivers and mechanics will go a long way towards completing a successful test. These folks need to buy into the evaluation up front. During the evaluation try to assure that there is no change in the use or maintenance of the product. Don't change the normal routine.

Step five is to analyze the data once the evaluation has been completed. This can be a very difficult task to do correctly. There will be an abundance of data to review. Creating graphs and charts will visibly point out any erroneous data. Include standard deviations in all your calculations.

The final step in the evaluation process is to physically write a report. It is always a good idea to share the information with all the people that participated to show your appreciation. At the end of the day everyone will know if the new product performed like it should and had met your ROI requirements. Bottom line is to purchase products that improve your fleet operations while reducing your costs.

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