



Flat Tires

Flat tires are more than a little annoying, but blowouts are expensive, mission-critical failures that cost a great deal of money. The trick is to prevent the former from causing the latter.

“You don't go from properly inflated to a blowout instantaneously unless you hit something on the highway,” says Curtis Decker, manager of product development at Continental Tire. “We estimate that about 80% of the roadside tire failures are a direct result of creeping air loss.”

In other words, 80% of blowouts could be prevented if tires were kept properly inflated. There is a well-founded expectation that tires will lose 2% of their inflation pressure, by volume, over about 30 days, even when the casing, the valve stem and the tire bead/ rim flange contact area are in perfect condition. The problem with that line of thinking is that people are inclined to say, I guess I only need to check my tires about once a month. Wrong.

Decker says it's uncommon to find a perfectly sealed tire/wheel assembly, so the actual rate of seepage could be as high as 2% per week, or 2% per day if there are other irregularities, such as puncture wounds from nails, a contaminated rim flange or bad valve stem.

“If you build your tire maintenance practices around what you're told is normal air loss, you're going to get caught on the back side of the curve,” he says. “At best, you'll see irregular wear related to inflation, poorer fuel mileage, etc. At worst, the tire will blow out because it has been run flat and damaged by excessive sidewall flex and deterioration of the rubber compounds.”

Even with all the technology we can throw at tires today, the most basic, yet the most important, is maintaining adequate inflation. “If a fleet has nothing else but a good air-pressure maintenance program, it will reap substantial benefits over having no program at all,” says Doug Jones, customer engineering support manager, Michelin Americas TruckTires.

It needn't be elaborate, but it has to be consistent, Jones says. Listed below are his top 5 steps to good tire inflation management.



RiskControl@PayneWest.com



1. The fleet tire-management program should be written, communicated, monitored and enforced. Appoint someone to check the tire pressures.
2. Establish target pressures and maintain them with calibrated air pressure gauges and trained employees willing to diligently check the pressures.
3. Conduct regular yard checks or tire pressure audits, document the results and take appropriate action.
4. Establish a routine for tire maintenance and inspections, including tire rotation, vehicle alignment and wheel and valve cap service.
5. Consider outsourcing tire management. If you don't have the time or resources to set up and run a maintenance program, there are many reliable outlets that can help.

SOURCE: safetytoolboxtopics.com



RiskControl@PayneWest.com



