



TIRES

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They are round, they get absolutely filthy when it rains — but clean them and they provide a sparkling accent to a tractor and trailer. They can be regenerated and they provide a soothing, soprano concert as they hum along the highway. They are the unsung heroes of the professional truck driver who relies on them to make a good living.

The fact is that no other vehicle component is underestimated as much as the tire.

Most people just see a tire for how it appears physically — a black, round piece of rubber. But that is a big misconception.

After all, tires are the only element connecting the vehicle to the road.

Their load-bearing capacity determines the gross weight of the vehicle, the maximum cornering speed and the shortest possible braking distance.

They often determine whether an accident occurs or whether one can be avoided.

Along with the engine and the driver, they constitute the lifeblood of the American commercial vehicle.

Outside of the cost of fuel, insurance and the capital expenditure to buy the rig, tires rate right up there as one of the largest financial outlays for a fleet or owner-operator.

Unfortunately, fleet owners and owner-operators often don't pay attention to how this important resource is performing until the weather is bad or the tires are worn out. Then on a scale of one to 10, the importance of tires becomes an 11.

But when you turn the steering wheel, hit the brake pedal, downshift or accelerate — you expect the tire to react and respond appropriately to carry the load and give you "X" number of miles.

Tires should rank right up there in importance with the brakes and suspension.

What's more, if one looks at the Compliance, Safety, Accountability (CSA) regulations, under the Vehicle Maintenance category tires have the potential to be the most heavily penalized category if not properly maintained.

Obviously, it pays to be knowledgeable about tires.

Successful fleet owners and owner-operators study the ins and outs of tires.

They look for tires that meet their traction needs and give them the wear they expect either on the basis of how many miles they get out of the tire or how many months the tire will last.

They engage in conversation with tire experts so they can get a solid foundation of what they can expect from a tire, how the tire has performed in the past and what they can expect in terms of the future development of tires that will

meet their needs.



Technical development continues to progress at a rapid rate and tires are increasingly being developed to work in a complex context with other tractor and trailer components to provide fuel savings. For instance, there are numerous options for a drive tire and a tire expert is best to tell you which application is best for you.

They are knowledgeable about how regulations impact their tire purchases. What do I need to be able to meet California Air Resources Board (CARB) regulations? Is the tire certified for SmartWay as an energy-saver? Is the casing suitable for retreading and how many retreads can I get off the casing?

What kind of return-on-investment (ROI) will I get with the tires I purchase? Will they meet my operational needs no matter where my trucks go since some tires are suitable for the environment in which I work and others aren't? How will my tires impact my regulatory

standing based on the emphasis federal regulators place on them?

Technical development continues to progress at a rapid rate and tires are increasingly being developed to work in a complex context with other tractor and trailer components to provide fuel savings.

Greater product specialization increases the need for advice just as much as the need for maintenance. Where am I going to get that advice? There's so much to know about purchasing tires.

So where can I turn to make sure I get the right advice and more importantly consistent advice about commercial vehicle tires? How can I be assured that I will pay the same price for the same tires whether I purchase them in New York, Florida, Tennessee, Texas, Washington or California and how can I be assured that the price of tires has stabilized after the costly price hikes that occurred in the wake of the Great Recession, price hikes that reached 40 percent or more?

How can I know that the emergency road service truck that comes to my rescue will not charge me an outrageous service fee after making me wait an inordinately long time by the side of the road?

The best answer to those questions lies in membership in a national tire program that includes both tire and cash management components.

With a fleet tire program, moderate-sized fleets and owner-operators who have traditionally had to go it alone have the ability to leverage their volume and get significant price breaks.



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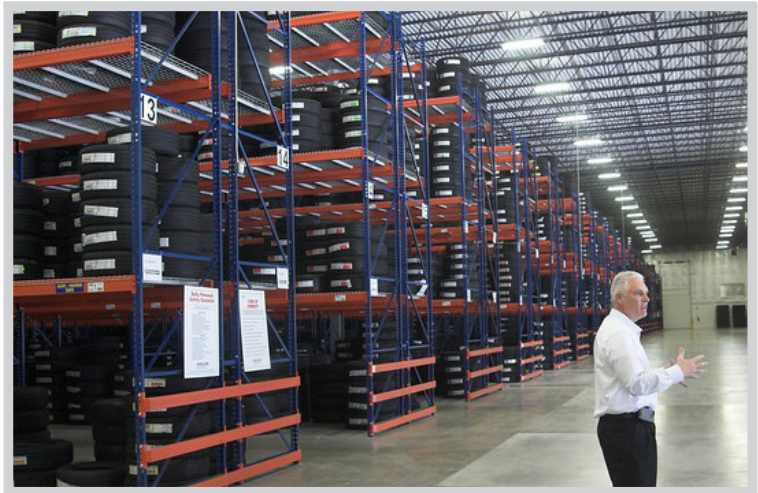
Such programs offer benefits that fleets and owner-operators might not have had with a national manufacturer. Some national or fleet tire program networks, which usually include a tire vendor and a company with fleet management services, have more than 2,000 points of service, each with expert salespersons and highly-trained technicians.

Membership in the program means access to a 24/7 emergency road call center that will immediately dispatch a service truck.

And membership in a fleet tire program means there's no need to worry about being "fleeced" when it comes to purchasing tires or requesting road service. With a tire fleet tire program you are going to pay the same network

prices no matter where they are in the lower 48 for the tire product — and from a service standpoint they are going to have a ceiling for road service costs so there is a maximum that can't be exceeded. Operating with this type of philosophy allows participating dealers to be profitable and allows the customer to have the peace of mind that no one's going to exceed established prices and capped service charges.

Customers can engage their local network dealer and request counsel from experts who are seeing how tires can be applied to a variety of applications. They can take a walk through a tire warehouse and see some of the designs that are available and which of those designs can meet their needs now and in the future.



Tire manufacturers don't have the internal manpower to manage the number of accounts and fleet management companies don't have expert knowledge of tires, so national tire programs offer the best of both worlds. And, there's a corollary that becomes a win-win for fleet management customers.

The customer always has the peace of mind on the road that they have an account with a major tire manufacturer and are not scrambling for a credit card or calling dispatch to get a tire changed because of an emergency.



Membership in a tire program means you can make the purchase or access the road service and put the charge on your tire program card and it is just like cash for 30 days. It's a simple B-2-B process that benefits all parties involved.

Just make the purchase or access the road service and put the charge on your tire program card and it is just like cash for 30 days. It's a simple B-2-B process that benefits all parties involved.

Customers avoid downtime and don't get caught up in Hours of Service dilemmas.

Being a member of a fleet tire program is just like having an additional insurance policy that assures you that if the tire you bought along the Gulf Coast for whatever reason goes bad while you're in New England, you know about what the tire is going to cost because the tire dealers are part of the same network.

When it comes to buying tires, customers can be confronted with a variety of options.

Some tire dealers who participate in a fleet tire program may offer up to four brands with and multiple options within each brand.

That's where national tire network dealers can become quality educators.

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They can seek a network dealer to ensure they are making the best decisions for their company and not add worry about downtime and tire costs to other concerns such as insurance, maintenance, compliance and getting the freight where it needs to go, among other things.



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It is critical that fleets and owner-operators be able to leverage every resource they have at their disposal and those resources are always available with a fleet tire program.

This allows fleet owners and owner-operators to have the relationship with dealers that will provide them guidance and help reduce their operating costs and run far more efficiently than they could on their own. And membership helps answer all those aforementioned questions.



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