

Caravan Tyres

Caravan tyres are not made specifically for caravan use; in fact, they are no different from car or light van tyres. However, caravan tyres perform a slightly different role. While they don't have to cope with high speed braking and cornering as most cars do, they must accommodate a greater load capacity than other vehicles with a great deal of pressure being placed on the tyres.

Tyre law

The legal minimum requirement is **1.6mm tread depth** across the central three-quarters of the tread, around the entire circumference of the tyre. Failure to meet these conditions could result in a **£2,500 fine and 3 penalty points per tyre.**

It is the driver's responsibility to ensure that tyres of the correct specification are fitted to caravans as specified by the manufacturer. Across an axle (e.g. front and rear wheels), tyres must be of the same size, load index and speed rating, and this also includes the spare.

In the same way you would with a car tyre, caravan owners should visually check tyres for sidewall cracks, bulges or signs of wear on a regular basis. If in doubt, seek advice from a tyre fitting specialist such as National Tyres and Autocare.

Tyre ageing

Most caravans have a fairly low mileage, being used mostly during holiday periods, so it takes a great deal of time for the tread to reach the minimum legal requirement. However, all tyres deteriorate with age and exposure to the elements which is a risk for caravan tyres.

The BTMA (British Tyre Manufacturers' Association) recommend that caravan tyres be replaced **every 5 years** and **should never be used if they are over 7 years old.** It's also recommended that caravan tyres with **a high inflation pressure (above 50psi) should be replaced at 3 years and never used beyond 5 years, according to The Caravan Club.**

Since caravans are often left standing for long periods of time, the tyres become more susceptible to flat spots which can lead to punctures. UV damage can also adversely affect tyre tread, so it is advisable that if leaving your caravan for more than a few weeks, it should be stored in a cool, dry place and away from direct sunlight. It is also recommended that the wheels be rotated each month to avoid flat spots from developing.

Owners choosing to remove the wheels and jack the caravan to allow the suspension to rest should seek advice from their insurance companies.

Tyre pressure

For a tyre to function properly it must be correctly inflated. Under-inflation and over-inflation can both lead to premature tyre failure, not to mention uneven tyre wear and diminished performance.

Motorists should check pressure regularly and always when the tyres are cold or have been driven 1-2 miles at most for absolute accuracy. After checking pressure, always ensure the valve is not leaking and the valve cap is securely fitted.

Refer to the vehicle manufacturer's handbook for the correct inflation pressure, or ask in branch for a FREE pressure check (National Tyres).

Load capacity

The load capacity in caravan tyres is very important, since the tyres must accommodate a great deal of weight. It's recommended that load be distributed evenly and as low as possible for stability when driving.

As a safeguard, it is recommended that motorists should aim for a maximum of **90% of the specified load capacity** for optimum safety. Check the manufacturer's recommendation and NEVER exceed the load capacity.

Noseweight

Noseweight should be varied to find the optimum for towing depending on the laden weight of the caravan. This is estimated at roughly **7%** of the laden weight of the caravan. However, this could be limited by the towing vehicle **manufacturer's limit** and the caravan's **hitch limit**. Insufficient weight on the hitch of the caravan could lead to possible instability.

Travelling abroad

It is **illegal** to use replacement tyres which differ in size, load or speed rating from the original tyre recommended by the **manufacturer in some European countries**. Any caravan **owners planning on driving abroad should check tyre requirements** before travelling.