

MICHELIN TIRES™

This month, Twister Trailer interviews an expert in the tire industry Mr. Doug Jones, Customer Engineering Support Manager for Michelin Tires North America. Tires are such an important part of our trailering experience, and a piece of the trailering puzzle that is often overlooked until something happens. Mr. Jones advises us on how to make sure we have the correct tires, the difference in truck, passenger car and trailer tires, and how to keep our tires going strong for as long as possible, in order to ensure a safe ride for our horses.

TWISTER: Mr. Jones, how do we know which tires we need on our trailers?

JONES: If you are purchasing new tires, your tire dealer can advise you on what you need. You will need a trailer specific tire, this is designated by an ST on the sidewall of the tire. Passenger car tires (P on the sidewall) will not hold up to the weight and abuse of trailering, and truck tires (LT) typically have a lot more tread than you need on a towed vehicle. A steel belted tire will hold up better for heavy loads than a nylon or fabric belted tire. Tires now are very application specific. Each style of tire is engineered to provide benefits for that type of activity. A towed vehicle needs very different attributes than a vehicle that is under its own power and needs traction. After you make sure you have a trailer specific tire, you will need to know the size of tire you require, as well as the weight of the loaded trailer. This will give you an idea of which tire you should purchase.

TWISTER: How do you know if the tires on your trailer need replacing? Do we need to replace all four tires at once?

JONES: On each tire, there will be a string of letters and numbers with the letters DOT included. This is the date code, which designates when that tire was manufactured. The last four digits will designate the week and year of manufacture for that particular tire. A tire's rubber breaks down over time. A five or six year old tire should be looked at by a tire professional to make sure it is still safe. Anything over that age should be replaced since the sidewalls start to deteriorate, no matter how good the tire looks. You don't necessarily have to replace all four tires at once. If you are replacing due to age or fatigue, probably all four are at the same stage. But if you are replacing due to a road hazard or something, you could replace them across the axle for even wear. You should also look for wear; this will tell you that you need new tires. Many times on a trailer, the rubber ages before there is excess wear.

TWISTER: How do we check for wear?

JONES: Every time you travel, you should check your tires for abuse and aging. Look at the sidewalls for cracks, separation, bulges, cuts, cracks, anything sticking out of the tire, as well as

always check all tires, including your spares, for proper air pressure.

TWISTER: What is the proper air pressure for a trailer tire?

JONES: On the sidewall of each tire there is a maximum pressure rating. Again, the proper air pressure depends on the weight of the loaded trailer. I would weigh your trailer, with all the horses, gear, water, feed, etc. that you normally carry. If you are getting to the top of the maximum weight allowed for those tires, you need to be on the top end of the air pressure rating listed on the sidewall. If you are not close to that maximum weight, you can back off the air pressure a little bit. This will allow a smoother ride, and allow the tire to have more give for road hazards and bumps.

TWISTER: How do we keep our tires going strong for as long as possible?

JONES: The number one thing is to keep them clean. I suggest cleaning with soap and water, any kind of road chemicals, mud, dirt, etc. will degrade the rubber and also potentially hide cracks from the eye. I would also advise to keep them at proper air pressure all the time, even when not in use. If I am going to be storing a trailer, I would advise over-inflating the tire by up to 10 psi, because a tire loses a few psi per month of inactivity. Do not use any kind of tire cleaner or shine product that has alcohol, silicone, or petroleum based products in it, those can break down the rubber.

TWISTER: You mentioned keeping the tires over inflated when storing. What else should we consider for maintaining tires during storage or extended periods of non-use?

JONES: Tires are made to be used. Rubber is a product that likes to be moved and used to keep it pliable. Tires that sit are going to deteriorate more than ones that are being used, except for obvious road hazards like nails and things. Rubber that sits gets brittle and dry. This causes the sidewalls to crack and disintegrate. If you aren't going to be using your trailer for a few weeks or a month, I would park the trailer on something, even a plastic bag or piece of plywood. The dirt or asphalt will leach the oils out of the rubber, hastening the disintegration and dryness of the sidewalls. Also, I would cover the tires to help keep sunlight and weather off the rubber. Ozone in the air causes the oxygen out of the rubber molecules, which is the scientific cause of the rubber breaking down. And again, I would check them every month or so and re-inflate them to the proper air pressure. Moving the trailer a little bit each month would also help, so that the weight isn't always sitting on the same part of the tire.

TWISTER: Mr. Jones, is there anything else you would like to say about tires?

JONES: Tires are a very important part of safe towing and shouldn't be overlooked. You want to make your trailer towing experience safe and stress free, and maintaining your tires ahead of any trips will help.

TWISTER: Mr. Jones, thank you so much for your tire insight, we will all be hauling safer using these tips.

The advertisement for Rowdy Silver Custom Designs features a dark background with splatters of yellow and blue paint. At the top left, a piece of jewelry is shown with the text 'BUCKLE UP' written vertically in blue. Below it, the word 'JEWELRY' is written vertically in blue. In the center, a circular piece of jewelry is displayed with the text 'Rowdy Silver' in a stylized font. Below this, the text 'Custom Designs by Stacey Sloan' is written in a cursive font. At the bottom left, the word 'TACK' is written vertically in blue. At the bottom right, the website 'www.RowdySilver.com' and the phone number '(575) 640-8090' are displayed in a stylized font. A small image of a horse's head is visible in the bottom right corner of the advertisement.