Imagine it: You’re on the highway, still a few hours away from your destination, nowhere near a community, and the orange symbol that tells you your tire pressure is dangerously low illuminates on the dashboard.

“This is the moment drivers on road trips dread because it means the whole day, maybe even the whole trip, is getting derailed,” says Carey Hull, director of retail and wholesale products, Kal Tire. “It’s also incredibly dangerous.”

That’s because tire pressure monitoring systems (TPMS), a feature on many vehicles sold in North America since 2007, are designed to alert you when one or more of your tires are not just low but significantly low.

“Low enough that you could be risking a blowout and an accident by continuing to drive on the tire,” says Hull.

But under-inflation isn’t the only air pressure problem Kal Tire stores see during road trip season, and risk of blowouts isn’t the only effect of not having properly inflated tires.

Ahead of road trip season, Kal Tire is educating drivers about why a host of reasons why it’s important to ensure tires are properly inflated.

“Driving on tires that are significantly over or under-inflated is a common mistake we see especially during road trip season because tires can be very deceptive: It’s almost impossible to tell just by looking at a tire if there’s a slow leak, which is usually the cause,” says Hull.

While most Canadians know when they should put their winter tires on (October or at consistent temperatures of +7 C and below), many drivers aren’t quite sure when those winter tires should come off.

“It’s almost impossible to tell with the naked eye if tire pressure is over or under-inflated, and drivers could be compromising handling, fuel economy and safety, including the risk of blowouts.

“Driving on tires that are significantly over or under-inflated is a common mistake we see especially during road trip season because tires can be very deceptive: It’s almost impossible to tell just by looking at a tire if there’s a slow leak, which is usually the cause,” says Hull.

The average April temperature for both Toronto and Vancouver, however, is almost +10 C.

By the time temperatures are consistently at +7 C and above, Butcher says winter tires are safe to come off. That’s because winter tires have rubber compounds engineered to stay soft and grip at +7 C and below, while the harder rubber compound of summer and all-season tires offers their best grip on wet and dry roads at temperatures above +7 C.
Time for new summer tires?
Consider the all-weather tire that survived White Hell

If you’ve never heard of White Hell—Nokian’s tire testing ground zero in Ivalo, Finland—The Globe and Mail writer Peter Cheney described it aptly: “The temperature is -23 C, and the trees are frosted permanently white, as if part of a gigantic Santa Claus set. It’s an arctic tableau of snow-covered hills, reindeer-filled forests and lakes frozen to the consistency of cast iron.”

This is where Nokian Tyres relentlessly and authentically puts its tires to the test, including the new WRG4, an all-weather year-round performance tire designed to deliver safety in any Canadian condition, from sun-scorched asphalt to rough, snowy highways.

“If a tire is tested under the most demanding conditions in the world in Ivalo, it will perform well everywhere,” says Matti Suuripää, manager of the Testing Centre, Nokian Tyres.

Like its three all-weather predecessors and dozens of winter, summer and all-season tire cousins, the WRG4 underwent more than three years of testing, including uncompromising tests on White Hell’s slush-filled roads, frozen pads and snow-covered hills.

Because it’s a true all-weather four-season tire, the WRG4 was also tested at facilities around the world, including wet and dry spring-like roads in Germany and Spain, and tread wear tests in the United States.

Only when a tire is performing at its best for its tailored, specific conditions—in WRG4’s case, just about everything—will a tire leave Nokian’s factories for stores like Kal Tire in Canada.

The WRG4 is Nokian Tyre’s fourth-generation all-weather tire and its innovations ensure top safety performance in everything from grip to tire life and slush-planing to high speed handling.

For drivers, it’s the duct tape of tires. The WRG4 works on almost anything: dry or wet highways, rural roads and snowy winter passes.

In fact, the WRG4 bears the mountain snowflake winter tire designation, and a handful of unique features allow it to perform in snow and cold weather conditions, including snow claws on the shoulder for up-and-down grip, staggered “centipede” siping (thin openings) to improve road contact and grip at any angle, and a sturdy rib that runs the circumference of the tire to keep tread blocks stiff for better fuel economy and tread life.

The sturdy and stiff outer shoulder tread blocks create stiffness for improved side-to-side grip.

“Three-dimensional locking sipes on shoulder tread blocks create stiffness for improved side-to-side grip,” says Olli Seppälä, Nokian Tyres product development manager.

To combat hydroplaning, the WRG4 is equipped with new “Coanda Technology”—shoulder tread blocks shaped in a curved, ramp-like design to guide and speed up the flow of water from up-and-down grooves to the side-to-side grooves that shoot water back out on the road.

For drivers who appreciate a quiet tire, the WRG4 features a special rubber compound between the sidewall and tread which filters and prevents the passage of sound from the road.

A special clinch rubber compound was also developed for the WRG4’s bead area near the tire to reduce interior noise in the vehicle by damping the vibrations from the tire body.

The WRG4 is making its way to Kal Tire stores across Canada with a full range of sizes expected to be available by summer 2018.

Fitments for SUV’s will be available by 2019.

Squirm, noise & savings: Why winter tires aren’t for summer

You can certainly leave your winter tires on a little while in the spring, but you wouldn’t want to ride them in the summer,” says Butcher.

Riding on winter tires on warm and hot road surfaces could lead to premature and uneven wear, reducing a tire’s life and its safety.

“You would be replacing your winter tires a lot sooner if you left them on too long,” says Butcher. Winter tires are meant to last two or three seasons, but on a vehicle 12 months in a row, that lifespan isn’t likely, and you probably wouldn’t want to try.

“Winter tires are designed to give better traction on ice and snow, but on wet and dry roads, you would be sacrificing handling. Plus they’d be squirmly and noisy in the summer.”

At the outset of summer and ahead of road trip season, there’s another good reason to switch to summer or all-season tires: fuel economy.

“Summer tires have a harder compound that makes them roll easily, so you would definitely spend less on gas.”

Many cities only start to see +7 C temps in May. Five-year avg ending 2017 for Calgary. Source: climateweather.gc.ca.
Kal Tire: Proper air pressure is critical

FROM PAGE 1

S o, what is it that drivers don’t know about keeping their tires properly inflated?

While most drivers don’t experience the catastrophic consequences of blowouts caused by under-inflated tires, every day, drivers everywhere experience the impacts of poorly inflated tires, and there are many.

“When it’s a long weekend and there are tons of drivers on the road, we see a lot more drivers coming in with flats. Absolutely,” says Tim Debolt, store manager, Castlegar, BC, a community flanked by mountain passes connecting southern BC and Alberta.

For every one vehicle that’s here with a flat tire, there are dozens out on the highway with tire pressure that’s too low or too high, and drivers are paying for it.

But for every one of those vehicles that’s here with a flat tire, there are dozens out on the highway with tire pressure that’s too low or too high, and they don’t know it, but they’re paying for it.”

Poor road handling—tires that just aren’t responsive or seem to want to pull another way—is another serious consequence of low tire pressure.

“Tires with very low pressure just can’t respond quickly when you come across debris or animals and you need to swerve,” says Debolt.

When tires are even marginally under-inflated, drivers also experience poor fuel economy because it takes more energy for the vehicle to roll. Premature tire wear is also likely because of too much flexing and tire overloading.

Over-inflated tires present many of the same risks: blowouts, premature wear, compromised handling, poor traction and a bouncy, uncomfortable ride. Overheating, thanks to an increase in ambient temperature and the friction of driving, make tires especially vulnerable to over-inflation in the summer months during which Canadians often take their longest road trips.

“Young air pressure can increase about 5 PSI (pounds per square inch) in the first half-hour of driving before it stabilizes,” says Hull.

Against the sweltering heat of summer asphalt at high speeds for long stretches, that number can rise. Warm ambient temperatures cause the air inside tires to expand. Tire pressure increases approximately 1 PSI for about every +5 C increase in temperature.

Fortunately, maintaining tire pressure is easy—if you remember to do it yourself, here’s an easy guide:

Step 1: Find the recommended PSI
You should be able to find your vehicle manufacturer’s recommended tire pressure on a sticker on the driver’s side door jam or in your owner’s manual.

Do not use the MAX PSI listed on the tire, press the tire gauge onto the valve (ensuring you’re not using the needle to stop). After you remove the valve cap on the tire, press the tire gauge onto the valve stem in the centre of the valve to ensure it’s ready to perform in case you get a flat tire and need to use it in an emergency.

Step 2: Check at the right time
Check your tire pressure when your tires are ‘cold’—in the morning or a few hours after driving—for the most accurate reading.

Step 3: Use a reliable pressure gauge
Whether you choose a stick, dial or digital tire pressure gauge, make sure it’s accurate because they’re sensitive to being dropped. After you remove the valve cap on the tire, press the tire gauge onto the valve (ensuring you’re not using the end that releases air). Now, wait for the press reading.

Step 4: Inflate as needed
Add just enough air to reach the recommended tire pressure. If you add too much, just push on the metal stem in the centre of the valve to release air.

Step 5: Remember your spare
After you check and inflate all four of your tires, do the same for your spare to ensure it’s ready to perform in case you get a flat tire and need to use it in an emergency.

“Tires with very low pressure just can’t respond quickly when you come across debris or animals and you need to swerve,” says Debolt.

“If your manufacturer’s recommended inflation level is 35 PSI (a common level for many passenger vehicle summer tires), on one of those all-time hot August afternoons, your tire pressure could be somewhere near 40 PSI.”

Fortunately, maintaining tire pressure is easy—if you remember to do it. After determining the manufacturer’s recommended pressure (often indicated on a door jam sticker or the owner’s manual), simply check pressure with a reliable gauge and at the right time (when tires haven’t been driven for at least a few hours), and inflate.

“We encourage people to check pressure at the outset of every trip, but it’s also good to get in the habit of checking once a month or even every time you fill up with gas. It just takes a few minutes and you’re going to be rewarded with tire life and performance, and, of course, safety.”

Kal Tire manager, Castlegar, BC

Kal Tire: Proper air pressure is critical

CHECKING TIRE PRESSURE:
A 5-STEP GUIDE

Of course, you can always visit a Kal Tire store near you for free air and pressure check, but if you’re keen to learn how to do it yourself, here’s an easy guide:

Step 1: Find the recommended PSI
You should be able to find your vehicle manufacturer’s recommended tire pressure on a sticker on the driver’s side door jam or in your owner’s manual.

Do not use the MAX PSI listed on the sidewall of your tire. This is the maximum pressure, not the recommended pressure.

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Kal Tire manager, Castlegar, BC
FUEL ECONOMY

Five ways to save fuel on summer road trips

Air-conditioning vs. windows open debate & other answers to help you gas up a little less this year

With any luck, summer holidays will be here before you know it, and whether you’re setting off for that two-week tour across the country, or just hitting the highway for a day trip sightseeing adventure, you might be starting to think about ways to save gas so you have more moolah for t-shirts and knickknacks.

Fortunately, there are a number of simple yet surprising ways you can enjoy better fuel economy throughout your travels, even during the hottest summer months.

1. SLOW RIDE, TAKE IT EASY
Using cruise control on open, flat stretches of highway stops you from speeding and also prevents you from braking to get back to the speed limit.

You reduce fuel consumption and save gas on road trips by driving at a consistent speed. It also makes driving through the Prairies a foot-stretching breeze.

2. BLOWIN’ IN THE WIND
As Bob Dylan himself sang, how many roads must a man drive down before he cranks up the... air conditioning... or something like that? The answer, my friend, depends on how much you want to spend on gas.

Experts estimate that driving with your air conditioning on can reduce your fuel’s economy up to 25 per cent. This applies to when you are driving at slower speeds, say on city driving, where it’s better to save gas by opening your window and letting the air circulate.

Popular belief suggests that at highway speeds, the drag (or wind resistance) created by having the windows down is worse for fuel economy than running the A/C.

However, a recent General Motors study confirmed running the A/C requires more gas than driving with the windows open. So, whatever the road, to save gas, windows open is the way to go!

3. ONE PIECE AT A TIME
Just as it is in winter, your vehicle may need some fine-tuning in summer for those long road trips. Getting a mechanic to look under your car’s hood before you head off will not only help save you from any hiccups along the drive, but it will also help you save gas on road trips and other expenses caused by faulty parts.

Just like humans, cars get thirsty in summer, so make sure you have your radiator filled with coolant and check the hose for any leaks.

Have your spark plugs checked and replaced if necessary, and also make sure your battery is fully charged. Last, make sure air and fuel filters are clean, and check your wheel bearings and make sure your brake callipers are not dragging.

4. RIGHT DOWN THE LINE
If your vehicle is pulling slightly to the left or right, or if your steering wheel feels crooked while driving straight, it likely means your alignment is off. Wheel alignment is one of the biggest causes of poor fuel economy.

Many things can cause your alignment to go awry, from hitting a pothole to bumping into a curb to wear and tear on your tires.

A certified technician like the team members at Kal Tire conduct a computerized alignment assessment that indicates if your vehicle is misaligned.

If it turns out you do need an alignment, the service will be worth it for your safety and what you save on gas on road trips.

5. DON’T DREAM OF FLATS
Low tire pressure is one of the main causes of poor fuel economy. A tire that is under-inflated by a pound or two of air can add to the vehicle’s drag—equating to low gas mileage.

If you’re unsure of your recommended tire pressure, check the sticker on your door jam or your owner’s manual, or visit one of our Kal Tire locations near you! We’ll inspect and air you up for FREE!

SOME OF THE easiest ways to help cut down fuel consumption on road trips include basic maintenance, such as having clean filters, lots of coolant and a healthy battery.

KalTire.com

Everyday low prices, everyday great service.

Buy & book online, installed in no time.

KalTire.com
The ultimate post-winter vehicle checklist

When you count on your vehicle to get your family through the summer road trip, higher quality, recently serviced vehicle fluids can go a long way toward protecting components and keeping everything moving.

Before you hit the highway, inspect and/or have serviced these fluids:

- Brake
- Coolant
- Transmission
- Windshield wiper
- Engine oil

Engine oil is particularly important as it cleans, cools and lubricates your engine to keep your vehicle’s most important component performing at its best. Now that spring is here, make sure you’ve got healthy oil and plenty of it!

FLUIDS & FILTERS are two post-winter pre-road trip vehicle maintenance tasks you can do yourself to improve vehicle performance.

Even a slightly bent or road grime-corroded wheel can lead to leaks and flat tires because of poor seals between the rim and the tire.

Wheel damage is also a common culprit of vehicle shaking and reduced handling, steering and braking performance—not exactly what you want to experience on the highway with the kids in the backseat.

Some of the areas to inspect on the tires include:

- Tread depth
- Inflation
- Cracking
- Sidewall bruising and unusual wear

Having both tires and rims inspected for pothole damage as well as regular wear and aging issues will give you peace of mind.

BILL'S TIP

Low air pressure shortens tire life

Auto expert and media personality Bill Gardiner, an inter-provincial licensed mechanic, answers your questions

Q: Why does low tire pressure make tires wear more quickly?

Bill: Low tire pressure (under-inflation) is considered the leading cause of premature and uneven tire wear. Simply put, underinflated tires run hotter which shortens the life of the tire carcass and accelerates the rate at which the tread rubber wears away.

Let’s look at factors that affect tire operating temperatures, some of which we can manage, and some, such as ambient temperatures and road surface temperatures, which we can’t manage.

Managing the loaded weight of our vehicle and the inflation pressure in our tires are completely within our control. Being careful not to overload our vehicle with passengers and cargo, and maintaining correct tire inflation pressures will help our tires run cooler and last longer.

Better fuel economy, safety and handling are other significant improvements we get when our tires are properly inflated. Tire pressure checks and inflation adjustments are always free at more than 250 Kal Tire stores across Canada.

Happy motoring!

BILL GARDINER

Book your Fall changeover appointment now.
Young Kal manager: ‘I like taking the next step up’

Twenty-six-year-old builds a career with Kal Tire and earns one of the company’s most esteemed awards

Ronnie St. Denis was just 15 years old when he started working at Kal Tire in Acheson, AB, sweeping floors and dusting tool benches. Six months later, he was hired to be the part-time shipper-receiver, and it wasn’t long before he had his eye on “the truck pad” where commercial trucks, semi-trailers and off-the-road vehicles pull in for tire repairs and installations.

“Before I knew it, I was the service truck driver, except I didn’t have a license yet so they hired someone to drive me to service calls so I could go out and change tires,” says St. Denis. Nine years later and now the manager of a mixed retail-commercial store in Edson, AB, St. Denis still walks out to work on the truck pad once a week.

“I love it,” says St. Denis, who likes the work itself as well as the vehicles and the customers. “I have a passion for semi-trucks and I have a lot of respect for what truck drivers do.”

Even though he loved everything about running a service truck, four years after moving in the role, St. Denis felt the need for a new challenge. Within days, his manager named him truck pad leader, a position that involves managing all the technicians who perform installations and repairs on the truck pad. He was doing so well, within months he was promoted to Acheson’s junior manager.

“That position trained me how to be incredibly safety-driven and I learned a lot about customer service and how to talk to different kinds of people. I started thinking more about how we ‘wow’ customers.”

Management suited St. Denis, and he made himself available to help out with other stores in north-central Alberta that needed a manager to fill in, spending extended stretches of time in communities such as Swan Hills, Barrhead and Whitecourt before being given a manager position in Edson, AB, in the spring of 2017.

“I tell team members, ‘If you’re willing to relocate, you’ve got a big career ahead of you.’”

St. Denis credits strong mentors at every stage and his thirst for challenge for helping his career take the track that it has.

“You need a good mentor to reach the next level. I love running a store and I love taking the next step up.”

“My career has changed so much over the last eight years.”

On the highlights in that time was hearing his name called when a senior manager called his name to come to the stage and accept Kal Tire’s True Service Award for his efforts in giving the Edson store a fresh start and a promising future.

“I was very surprised and I felt the appreciation from upper management. It’s nice to hear that you’re doing a good job,” says St. Denis, who takes pride in praising his own team, who he often refers to as his “family.”

On the whiteboard in his office, where he recently interviewed a new tire technician, he scrawled the words: ‘When you join Kal Tire, you’re not an employee, you’re a team member. You’re part of the family.’

In addition to team atmosphere, St. Denis encourages others to join Kal Tire because of its excellent benefits, a Best Careers program, and its approach to safety.

“I tell my team: I want you to be safe from the moment you wake up to the end of the day. That’s what was expected of me, and I expect that too.”
What’s the difference between radial and bias tires?

Radial tires have been the standard for North American passenger vehicles since the 1970’s. However, when it comes to RVs and trailers, many US manufacturers still outfit new models with bias ply tires. What’s the difference, and does it really matter which type of tire your RV has?

You’ll be able to find out whether your RV is outfitted with bias or radial tires by looking on the sidewall. Just below the tire size, you’ll see the word ‘radial’ or ‘bias.’ If it says ‘radial,’ you’re in luck because they’re built to withstand Canada’s rugged outdoors.

How are radial tires different from bias? It all comes down to construction.

Radial tires, sometimes referred to as ‘radial ply’ tires, are constructed using a combination of polyester and/or nylon plies that run straight across the tire, from bead to bead. With bias ply tires, the cords run diagonally across the tire, overlapping in a crisscross pattern.

Both versions typically feature additional steel belting for improved durability, tire stability and conformity to the road surface. Steel belting also helps your tires resist punctures.

Due to a radial tire’s design, the sidewall and tread act independently of one another. As a result, sidewall flex isn’t transmitted to the tread, which is a good thing. It allows the vehicle to transfer more power to the ground for improved handling.

On a bias ply tire, the overlapping plies tend to be thicker and less flexible. The crisscross ply configuration also causes the tread and sidewall to be interdependent.

So, when the sidewall flexes, so does the tread. This affects its ability to maintain optimal contact with the road surface. For RV-ers who drive on gravel roads in Canada, that’s not welcome news.

The greater flexibility of the radial tire—or lack thereof in bias ply tires—also affects ride comfort. Simply put, radials are better equipped to absorb bumps and uneven road conditions, which is exactly what you want when you’re riding along a gravel road.

Meanwhile, the inherent stiffness of bias ply tires means passengers will feel more of the impact and vibrations transferred from the road surface. For the Canadian RV community, it’s important to note that bias ply tires are not readily available in tire shops north of the border. So, if you get a flat and need to replace a bias ply tire along your journey, you’ll probably have to wait several days to have a replacement shipped from the US.

Conversely, radial tires are readily available in tire centres across Canada and the US. In the event that tire trouble waylays you while you’re cruising south to Phoenix or Florida, you won’t be sidelined for long.

If you upgrade to a set of radials for your RV or trailer, be sure to switch your spare as well.

When should you replace your wiper blades?

The 5 S’s of wiper blades

It’s raining. You flick your windshield wiper switch and instead of a clean sweep, you get streaks, squeaks or jumps and two precise brown half moons with threads of dirt dribbling across the glass. What is clear, however, is that your wiper blades have no business being on your window anymore: They don’t work and you can’t see.

When should you replace your wiper blades so you don’t find yourself in this situation?

A great rule of thumb is to inspect them every six months (some drivers find it easy to remember to do this along with winter tire changeover), and change them if necessary at that time, or the next six-month interval. In short, at least once a year.

If it feels like that’s just one more thing to remember, your windshield wipers can easily tell you themselves with the ‘5 S’s of Windshield Wipers.’

As soon as you see any kind of change in your driving visibility, it means your wiper blades aren’t contacting the windshield surface properly, and you need to have your wiper blades replaced.

So much of your driving decisions are based on what you can see. For less than you think and a few minutes of your time, you can help prevent a collision with effective wiper blades.
South Africa team revitalizes Toddler Park

In a neighbourhood near Johannesburg where parents struggle to feed their families, Kal Tire’s Mining Tire Group South Africa has given dozens of children something to smile about.

You can tell, in the picture, that it pains them to be standing still, waiting for this photo to be taken while these brand new strider bikes rest at their feet and the entrance to a whole new playground bursts with yellows and blues, letters and swings.

A handful of the more than 60 children who attend Toddler Playground school in Randfontein were among the first to ride, jump and skip through a playground that Kal Tire’s West Rand team helped to revitalize.

The ‘before’ photos show an outdoor play area of heartfelt intentions: worn black tires line a red dirt path; scorched grass and faded paint circle scratched monkey bars and an unfinished wooden sandbox.

The ‘after’ photos have converted the playground to tell a different story, where laughter and smiles and all kinds of possibilities will live.

The tires surrounding the path are painted white, blue, yellow and green. Now marked by a bright yellow tile that says ‘COME IN,’ the path encircles a sandbox painted with the letters of the alphabet, and, in a tiny corner, handprints and the words ‘Kal Tire.’

Numbers and arrows on the now paved path will usher the students along on one of the 10 new strider bikes.

The project began in December 2017 and wrapped up in early January 2018, culminating with a photo of team members and teachers surrounded by a dozen or so children, hands folded, waiting ever so patiently to ride those bikes.

Kal Tire supports new Trades Training Centre

Kal Tire—a company that knows first-hand the value of well-trained tradespeople—is thrilled to be supporting a much-needed Trades Training Centre at Okanagan College’s campus in Vernon, BC.

“We’re proud to support a new learning environment that will provide the highest quality trades training, and a promising career path for students,” says Robert Foord, president, Kal Tire.

“This new centre will create a positive impact for our local economy and help keep qualified tradespeople in the North Okanagan,”

Kal Tire pledged $250,000 toward Okanagan College Foundation’s Bright Horizons - Building for Skills campaign to raise $1 million to construct the centre following a contribution of the same amount from Vernon philanthropist George Galbraith.

The two gifts will support the completion of a 13,450 square-foot state-of-the-art centre on the Vernon campus that will have the capacity to train approximately 150 students per year.

The project is being supported through the federal government’s Post-Secondary Institutions Strategic Investment Fund. Through this fund, the province of BC is investing $2.9 million and the government of Canada has provided $2.7 million.

The Okanagan College Foundation is fundraising for the remainder of the project cost and to provide program and student bursaries and scholarships that will help increase access to training.

The contribution from Kal Tire will see one of the new centre’s trades shops named for the company.

“We know it’s our people and the communities we serve that make us successful, so we are always looking for opportunities to give back, and it’s especially meaningful when we get to support a local project that will help so many people and so many organizations for such a long time,” says Foord.

Construction of the $6.2 million building is underway, with completion targeted for spring 2018.