



5th June 2001

TYRE – AGEING

(Passenger Cars, Light Vans and Trailers up to 3.5 tonne GVW)

Most drivers use the remaining tread depth of their tyres to determine when they should be replaced.

In most cases, this approach is entirely appropriate since tyres usually wear out before the effects of age become critical. However, there are certain circumstances where the “ageing” process or, in other words, a deterioration of the rubber compounds, can render a tyre unserviceable even if it is unused.

Rubber compounds used in modern tyres contain anti-oxidising chemicals, which slow down the rate of ageing. However they cannot eliminate “ageing” altogether.

In addition to poor tyre maintenance, factors such as poor storage, infrequent use, environmental conditions, including exposure to direct sunlight and operation in coastal climates, all accelerate the ageing process.

As most of these influencing factors are outside the control of the tyre manufacturer, it is difficult to predict the life span of a tyre.

In ideal conditions, a tyre may have a life expectancy that exceeds 10 years from its date of manufacture. However, such conditions are rare.

Tyre ageing is often identified by small cracks (crazing) appearing in the tyre sidewall and other flex areas. Regular inspection will identify this symptom before it leads to tyre failure.

However, tyre “ageing” may not exhibit any external indications and, since there is no non destructive test to assess the serviceability of a tyre, even an inspection carried out by a tyre expert may not reveal the extent of any deterioration. Furthermore, deterioration in vehicle ride quality or the onset of vibration may signify the imminent failure of a tyre, which ***must*** be investigated without delay.

Tyres fitted to spare wheels, caravans and trailers are particularly vulnerable to the “ageing” process.

In the absence of legislative controls governing the age at which tyres should be removed, given all of the above factors, ***BRMA members strongly recommend that unused tyres should not be put into service if they are over 6 years old and that all tyres should be replaced 10 years from the date of their manufacture.***

Increasingly, vehicle manufacturers and caravan organisations are reflecting the above recommendations in their owner’s manuals and member’s handbooks.

All references to the age of tyres relate to their date of manufacture, which can be determined from the sidewall markings.