



Death, Taxes, and Flat Tires: They're Gonna Happen

The British call them "punctures," but to us Americans they are plain old flat tires.

There are fewer flats these days than in past decades, given advances in the manufacture, design and durability of 21st century tires. Some tires today can roll on for miles even after being punctured, and modern tires are made to be less prone to blowouts and tire wear. Some are basically flat-proof.

When flats do happen, though, nothing can delay road trips more jarringly. Also the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration says that flat tires and blowouts remain a leading cause of highway traffic accidents. Even though flats cannot always be prevented, there are ways to make tires less vulnerable and make vehicles safer along the way.

Flat tire avoidance

Routine inspection and tire maintenance are essential to tire performance. In addition, paying attention to road hazards and avoiding them when possible will almost always prolong the life of tires.

Here are some things to pay attention to in keeping your tires in good road condition:

Tire pressure: Tires should be maintained at the correct air pressure indicated on the sidewall or as advised by the manufacturer. Tires with too much air can be damaged by bumpy roads and potholes. Tires that are not inflated enough may increase friction on the roadway, resulting in a blowout. Check tire pressure routinely, and do so when the tires have rested for three hours. Many vehicles now monitor tire pressure automatically and alert drivers through a signal on the dashboard.

Tire wear: Professionals say that inspecting tires for uneven wear should be a routine part of maintenance. If tires show uneven wear, they may be more susceptible to flats or blowouts. Tire rotations can help alleviate uneven wear. The NHTSA recommends tires be rotated every 5,000 miles.

Tire treads: Look for worn tire treads. Check for wear bar indicator marks located between the tread pattern of the tires. If the wear bar is level with the treads, it's time for new tires. Otherwise, place a quarter between the grooves of the tire. If the tread doesn't extend beyond the top of Washington's head, it's a good idea to replace the tires.

Beware of construction sites: Drivers should try to avoid areas under construction. Rocks, nails, metal shards, glass, and divots in the roads can cause punctures and eventually flats.

Flat tire repair

When flats occur, having the right tools and understanding the procedure for fixing the flat is key.

Drivers will need an inflated spare tire, a jack, a lug wrench, bracing material (to keep the vehicle from rolling, such as a brick or piece of wood), and the vehicle's owner's manual. It is essential, for safety, to fix the flat in an area away from traffic and on a flat surface.

Another tool that can help solve the crisis is an air pump powered by the car battery. If a tire is leaking air

very slowly, pumping it up again can buy drivers a few more miles to get to a service station or garage where a permanent fix can be obtained.

Such pumps are available at any auto supply or major department store. You can also purchase aerosol flat-fixers that pump air and a leak-blocking sealant into a tire. These, however, will work only with smaller punctures or leaks and do not provide a true fix for the tire.

Such spray-can tire sealants should be only a temporary stop-gap, and when the tire is taken in for repair or replacement, the tire technician should be told that a spray-in flat sealant has been used.

If you plan to deal with your flat by raising the car and replacing the tire with a spare, here are the steps to follow:

Use the owner's manual to find the correct position to place the jack to lift the car. It is best to use the jack that comes with the car in that it will be designed for use on the kind or vehicle you have.

Remove hubcaps or center covers to access the lug nuts. With the lug wrench, loosen lug nuts in a counter-clockwise direction.

Take off the tire and put on the spare. Replace and tighten the lug nuts. Replace hubcaps or covers. Do this process carefully and avoid jarring the vehicle so that jack won't be accidentally disbalanced.

Slowly lower the vehicle, check the spare tire visually, and drive cautiously to ensure the spare is in working order. Purchase a new tire or have a hole plugged or repaired at a tire center.

Dealing with flats used to be (and for some still is) one of those skills that parents took time to teach their children as they neared driving age. In these days of high-tech tires, less prone to go flat, that lesson is sometimes neglected.

If you are a new driver, or if you're unsure of some of the steps in safely changing a flat, grab a handy knowledgeable individual and take a little time to get a hands-on tire-changing lesson.

That experience will serve you well some evening when you hear and feel that dreaded thump and you're faced with getting out the spare and getting yourself back on the road all on your own.

Speaking of the spare, also take time to learn exactly where it is in or on your vehicle, how to get to it, and how to reach the tire-changing tools that might be stowed beneath it.

Keep a good working emergency light in case the problem happens at night. Changing a tire at night is no fun in any circumstances, but basically impossible without light.

What's the best defense against flat tires? Having quality tires with a good tread on your vehicle to begin with. Double D Tire in Greeneville can help you make sure your vehicle is wearing the right kind of "shoes."

They have strong customer loyalty, fast and efficient service, and a reliable good reputation. At Double D you'll find answers to your tire questions are provided with friendly hometown courtesy.

Road Trip Vacation? Here's How To Make It Work!



Driving vacations can be budget-friendly ways to get away from home for a few days.

Such excursions can be customized according to families' particular schedules and interests. To make the most of driving vacations, travelers can employ these tips.

• Map the destination.

Figure out the duration of the trip ahead of time, jotting down approximate times of travel. This will help you break up the ride so you can include stops for food, bathroom breaks and fill-ups.

• Plan food and accommodations.

Some people like to plan road trips as they go. Those who prefer to have greater control can decide where to stop in advance, researching hotels, attractions and dining establishments.

• Be firm with departure times.

Make a plan to leave at a particular hour and stick to it. This will help to keep the trip on schedule.

• Share the driving.

Know your driving limits and share driving duties with someone else who can take over if or when fatigue sets in.

• Pack stuff for kids to do.

Prevent or delay the "are we there yet's" with movies, puzzles, books, and music for children. Pack headphones so their devices will not disturb others.

• Schedule a tuneup beforehand.

Before departing, ensure your vehicle is in good working order to reduce the likelihood of a breakdown. Make sure you have a spare tire and tire-changing tools, just in case.

• Don't pack too much.

Leave some room in the vehicle for souvenirs picked up along the way. Take advantage of hotel laundry facilities to keep clothes fresh and to avoid having to pack too many outfits.

• Adjust as you go.

Even the best plans need to be modified on occasion. Keep an open mind and be flexible so you can enjoy any unexpected wonders that may pop up. Flexibility also can help you adapt to traffic or detours.

Tire Wear: How To Read It

Tires should wear evenly across the tread. If you're noticing excessive wear on the rear inside tires, you may have too much junk in the trunk or need an alignment adjustment.

Uneven tire wear can also result in less MPG's and more pain at the gas pump.

Poor alignment can shorten a tire's life by thousands of miles and compromise very crucial steering and suspension parts. That's a big hit to the wallet.

If you don't want to replace tires as often and enjoy the benefits of better fuel economy, have your alignment checked, at the very least, with every other oil change or at the first sign of uneven or premature tire wear.



Double D Tire

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