

WHEN BUYING TIRES



Ralph Seekins

Some of you may know that my favorite footwear is cowboy boots. That's what I preferred growing up and still do today. However, today I buy a lot different boot than I did in my younger years. Where once all I could afford was a pair of black Acme boots that I wore until the soles fell off, today I buy Justin boots with great comfortable insoles, better heel and sole material and made of better and lighter leathers. The boots I wear today are better looking, and last a lot longer than did my old Acme boots.

What does that have to do with tires? Well, just like the boots I purchased then and now, there are a lot of differences in the tires you can purchase for your vehicle. And just like boots you might buy for yourself, the tires for your vehicle should meet the needs you have for your vehicle. So let's talk tires.

Treadwear is first. Today,

you can expect treadwear for a properly aligned and balanced tire to range somewhere between 40,000 and 90,000 miles. And you can find a wear grade number assigned by its manufacturer on the side of the tire to tip you off on what to expect. The higher the number over 100, the better the treadwear is expected to be. So, the tread on a 300 rated tire should last 3 times as long as one with a 100 grade when operated in the same conditions.

Then there is traction rating. Again, there is a letter grade for the traction rating on the side of the tire. AA is the highest rating, A is second highest, B is third highest, and C is the worst. Simply put, a AA rated tire will stop in shorter distance than any other and so on down the line.

Temperature grades are also assigned to tires and can also be found on the side of the tire. An A grade says that tire is better than a B or C rated tire for resistance to heat.

Finally, price is also a consideration. Pretty much universally, you will find the least expensive tires out there in the \$100.00 per tire range. Better tires (better tread wear, better traction rating, and

better heat resistance) will be in the \$150.00 range with the best being in the \$200.00 per tire range. Personally, I try to purchase better rated tires - 400+ on treadwear, A or B on traction and B on heat range. Your needs may be different. Then, to save some dough, look to buy when you see one of the "buy three tires and get one free" sales offered by manufacturers. I did so for one of our personal family vehicles not long ago when Ford offered that deal through our QuickLane Tire and Auto Center.

Your tire center can help you pick the right tire for your needs and can also help you understand the proper maintenance plan to help you maximize the life of your vehicle's tires. Stop by and explain your driving habits and where and how you use your particular vehicle most. You'll be glad you did.

Best wishes for safe driving.

Ralph Seekins has more than 42 years' experience in the automotive industry. He started as a mechanic, worked in sales, and for the past 36 years, has been the owner of Seekins Ford Lincoln, Inc. If you have an automotive question you'd like answered, forward it to ralphs@seekins.com.