

TIRE ROTATION

rotating where the tires are mounted on a vehicle. For lots of reasons, any tire will wear differently than the others based on where on the vehicle that tire is located. The reason - each tire experiences different stress levels and load levels therefore resulting in different wear rates and wear patterns.

So, to equalize wear and get the most use out of the tires on your car or truck, you should rotate them on a regular schedule. A generally accepted industry standard is to rotate tires about every 5,000 miles - for most drivers that would be about twice a year. The recommended rotation pattern for most tires is what is called the "cross rotation." Here the left front is moved to the right rear and the right front is moved to the left rear and then the rear tires are moved directly forward so that the left rear is now on the left front and the right rear is on the right front. This rotation followed in rotation sequence results in every tire spending time in every location as time goes forward. However, some vehicles come equipped with "directional" tires and these should not be cross (diagonally) rotated. And, as in the case of trucks with dual rear wheels, the owner should check with his/her owner's manual since there are several options to safely accomplish tire rotation on vehicles so equipped. Another advantage of tire rotation is the tires tend to wear at the same rate between front and rear which is important on four wheel drive and all wheel drive vehicles to help

prevent wear on the driveline components.

As we have also discussed, tire pressure is a very important factor for tire wear, passenger comfort and safety. So, when rotating the tires, you should absolutely check and adjust the tire inflation pressures to meet the manufacturer's recommendations. You can find those recommended pressures in your owner's manual and, in many cases on a label stuck on the driver's door post. For the last couple years I have replaced the compressed air in the tires on our family vehicles with nitrogen gas. That stabilizes the pressure changes that are caused by the wide swings in our ambient temperatures. Nitrogen stations are readily available these days and this more stable gas is a good investment.

So, in summary, as you schedule your normal maintenance for your cars and trucks, it's a very good idea to throw in a tire rotation about every 5,000 miles or at least twice a year. Your vehicle's tires will definitely wear longer and the small cost of the rotation will pay off over time.

Ralph Seekins has more than 42 years' experience in the automotive industry. He started as a mechanic, worked in sales, and for the past 35 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.



Ralph Seekins

I recently checked out a good sized pile of "take off" tires - those that had been replaced for one reason or another. I was curious to see what caused folks to buy new tires for their car or truck. Then I spent some time asking folks who were having new tires installed at our Quick Lane Tire and Auto Center why they decided to do so at that particular time.

In some cases, the reason folks expressed for installing new tires was pretty obvious; i.e., blowouts from hitting potholes, cut sidewalls from sharp rocks or other road hazards, tread separations, and uneven wear. Others, a clear majority, were replacing tires because of various stages of tread wear - some worn all the way down to where the internal belts were visible. Frankly, most people just wanted safe tires hauling them and their families around on our Interior Alaska roads.

We've talked on several occasions about how to get the maximum life out of the tires on your car or truck. But one thing we haven't explored to any extent that will help extend tire life is tire rotation. Let's talk about it.

Tire rotation is just that -