

YOU & YOUR CAR

Don't use winter tires during summer

BY RICHARD RUSSELL

QUESTION: I have an old car (1996) with one-season-old Michelin X-ice tires. Because of the age of my car, I don't think that I will keep the car more than another two-three years.

My all-season tires are all worn out. Instead of buying new all-season tires for summer driving, I plan to keep my winter tires all year around. I know that this will wear out my winter tires sooner but do not know how soon. It is an economical consideration.

Do you think that I can save some money by not investing in new all-season tires?
William

ANSWER: I think that would be a case of false economy – and create a potentially dangerous situation.

It does indeed make economic sense to use one set of tires year around. That was the premise behind the development of all-season tires. While they are a compromise in most ways, they are in fact designed to remain effective under a wide range of temperatures and conditions.

Quality winter tires like yours were developed to be at their best at colder temperatures.

There is a lot more to a winter tire than a tread designed to provide grip on snow and ice. Virtually every component of the tire from carcass to compound, chemicals to tread design are all carefully developed to be at their best at or below the freezing point.

The entire tire, including the tread, has to remain flexible under very cold conditions in order to perform as intended. That same tire, under hot summer conditions, will become way too soft and supple.

In both turning and stopping situations, the tread itself will deform and provide very little grip. Not only will it be poor in emergency manoeuvres, that now ultrasoft and deformed tread will wear at a greatly increased rate.

I'm not aware of exact numbers, but would bet that each month of summer driving will be the equivalent to an entire winter of wear.

And all that time, you won't have the grip needed in an emergency. Then come next winter, you're driving on a set of worn-out winter tires with considerably less tread depth than would have been the case if you had removed them when the weather started to warm up.

So by making this move, you will have tires that are much less effective – and safe – in both summer and winter.

Having said all that, the key factor is how and how much you drive. You indicate a desire to keep the vehicle another two to three years. That would mean as many as four winters on a set of winter tires – which is, by industry stan-

dards, approaching the life expectancy of a set of soft winter tires – without any summer use.

As I said at the outset, winter tires are designed for winter only. All-season tires are a compromise tire capable of reasonable grip in all but very cold temps and summer tires are best for the time of year when your winter tires are resting.

Invest in a set of good all-season tires now and you will get most of that expense back at trade-in time when they are still in good shape.

TRAFFIC INFORMATION

QUESTION: I have been in the market for a global-positioning-system device with traffic services, but I have not been able to find any product/service reviews from Canada to guide my choice.

From my research, there are different methods that GPS device manufactures use to obtain traffic data: FM traffic broadcast; XM satellite; updates from police and sensors imbedded in roads; and Microsoft Corp. has MSN direct service with traffic information.

The only service I'm aware of that potentially functions in Canada (GTA/Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver) is the XM traffic service. The public is able to obtain the traffic service subscription with or without music subscription.

I commute between Hamilton and Toronto and would like to know if any GPS devices with functioning traffic services are available in Canada and how frequently are they updated (i.e. live, every 10 minutes, every hour, twice daily)?

Would having the service with the ability to travel around highway congestion through city and residential areas improve commuting time?
Peter

ANSWER: Great idea, but I am not aware of the service being available from the most popular GPS-based service providers.

Questions to several of the most common among them (Garmin, TomTom, Magellan) failed to yield a response, leading me to believe it is not available in Canada for the same reason mapping is poor in areas outside the GTA – supply and demand. Too few people spread across a massive hunk of real estate.

The U.S.-based satellite radio networks would seem the obvious answer, but behind the scenes they rely heavily on hard-drive-based programming and lack the personnel and systems to keep track of traffic in hundreds of communities across the continent – let alone those outside the United States.

While there has been considerable consolidation among public radio providers in this country, they too have mini-

How to reach us

Automotive journalist Richard Russell has run a driving school for 20 years, is a member of the Society of Automotive Engineers and has been a member of the Technology of the Year committee of the Automobile Journalists Association of Canada for 10 years.

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mal staffing in order to keep expenses down, and are unlikely to be able to maintain or monitor such a service.

General Motor Corp.'s OnStar navigation system offers what is likely the most complete and often-updated service of the type you seek and has Canadian input from the Oshawa area. But it is more likely to include information on major traffic issues.

I agree that such services would do everything from reduce commute time to ease traffic and reduce road rage. But I am not aware of any available at this time.

ALL & SUNDRY

That new-car shine

BY RICHARD RUSSELL

It's great when a Canadian company proves it can compete in any realm. Some auto plants in this country have been ranked at the very top of the initial quality charts and of course Magna International has become a serious player in the global industry.

Add World's Best Wax Corp. to that list.

The Toronto-based company produces some of the finest car-care products in the world. Seven years ago owner and president Frank Duarte embarked on a strategy of developing a line of products that rely on environmentally friendly natural ingredients rather than the synthetics common in mass-produced petroleum-based products.

He figured that true enthusiasts, who like to spend hours on the appearance of their vehicle, would be willing to pay a premium for hand-crafted products capable of bringing their paint to show-car standards.

For example, the World's Best Wax (WBW) auto wax contains higher than normal amounts of Brazilian white carnauba wax and no silicone. It comes in two formulas: Collector (36 per cent carnauba) and Connoisseur (46 per cent).

We tried the latter on black, dark green and copper-coloured paints, in direct comparison with two widely advertised cleaner-waxes and a well-known high-end European wax/glaze. We found the WBW produced a deeper and more transparent shine than the others, especially the common commercial brands.



The World's Best Wax premium collector wax contains 36 per cent carnauba wax and no silicone. RICHARD RUSSELL

The lack of silicone means no white deposit on adjacent plastic or vinyl trim and we found the results even more impressive when using the company's Surface Cleanse product to remove old wax and other chemicals, especially on older vehicles.

WBW contains no cleansers, abrasives or harsh chemicals so additional coats can be layered on for an even deeper, salon-like gloss. Simply wipe on with a clean cloth, applicator or even the palm of your hand, wait less than one minute, wipe off the excess and buff.

World Best Wax products

come in containers that would be just at home on the vanity or dresser as in the garage. Quality costs – a six-ounce (30-millilitre) container of Connoisseur sells for \$100 retail and \$75 via the company's website; the Collector formula costs \$80 and \$65, respectively. But that is enough for up to 35 applications, depending on the size of your vehicle. A three-ounce container of Surface Cleanse is \$24, \$20 via the Net.

Check out the complete line of WBW's car-care products at www.worldsbestwax.com, or call toll-free: 1-866-815-2608.

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