Under Pressure: Uk Motorists Put Lives At Risk And Waste £246 Million On Fuel

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- 62% of cars on the road are running on incorrectly inflated tyres
- 37% are so underinflated they are classed as 'dangerous' or 'very dangerous'
- 5% of motorists are driving on punctured tyres

Motorists in the UK are wasting £246* million a year on fuel and putting lives at risk by driving on dangerously underinflated tyres, according to Michelin.

The tyre manufacturer analysed results from more than 23,000 cars in the UK and found that 37 per cent had at least one tyre classed as either "dangerously underinflated" or "very dangerously" underinflated.

In all, 62 per cent of vehicles were found to have underinflated tyres, while five per cent of vehicles had a tyre with a puncture and one per cent had tread depths below the legal minimum of 1.6mm.

The figures come from eight years of Michelin-run events and they suggest attitudes to tyre safety are not improving.

Jamie McWhir, car, van and 4x4 technical manager for Michelin in the UK, said: "The proportion of cars with dangerously underinflated tyres has pretty much stayed the same over the eight years we have been running our Fill Up With Air events.

"That's pretty depressing when you consider the volume of vehicles and the implications. Seriously underinflated tyres are dangerous, they use more fuel, they wear out quicker and they cause the car to produce more pollutants and greenhouse gases."

Michelin classifies tyres that are between 7psi and 14psi below the manufacturer's recommendation as "dangerously underinflated", while 14 psi or more underinflation is deemed to be "very dangerous."

Running a car with tyres underinflated by 7psi decreases fuel efficiency by about one mile per gallon. If average fuel consumption is assumed to be 45 miles per gallon on correctly inflated tyres, and average distance driven is 7,900 miles a year, motorists on 7psi underinflated tyres are using on average 18.2 litres of fuel a year unnecessarily.

At an average fuel cost across diesel and unleaded of £1.18 per litre, that means 11.84 million of the UK's 32 million cars are wasting a total of more than £254 million a year.

In addition, more than 538,000 tonnes of excess CO2 are being emitted by those cars.

Mr McWhir added: "It's crucial that motorists understand the importance of driving on tyres with the correct pressure, especially as they're the only point of contact with the road and are therefore critical to the safety of the vehicle, its passengers, other road users and pedestrians.

"Last year the Department for Transport found that dangerous tyres were responsible for more than 40 per cent of vehicle defect related deaths. It is so important to fit tyres of a sufficient quality and then look after them properly."

Underinflated tyres hamper road-holding, braking, steering and resistance to aquaplaning. Underinflation also reduces tyre life.

Michelin recommends checking tyre pressures – including the spare tyre – at least every month and before every long journey.

Last month industry campaign group TyreSafe and Highways England found that more than 10 million tyres in use on roads in England, Scotland and Wales could be illegal.

Stuart Jackson, TyreSafe chairman, said: "It's a question of educating motorists to take responsibility for their safety and that of others on the road.

"As vehicles have become increasingly reliable, owners have become less used to performing what were

once considered basic precautionary checks before setting off on a journey. Tyres too are much more technologically advanced but they do wear and can get damaged so it is down to the driver to regularly check they're safe

"Awareness among Britain's motorists of the importance of tyre safety urgently needs to improve."

Michelin inspected 23,741 cars over the past eight years as part of its Fill Up With Air roadshow which tours the UK offering free pressure and tyre checks for motorists, as well as tyre maintenance and road safety advice.

For more helpful tyre and general vehicle safety and economy advice, visit www.michelin.co.uk and explore the Learn-Share section.

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Top tips from Michelin for looking after your tyres and staying safe on the road:

Michelin's top tyre safety and maintenance tips

1. Check your tyre pressure every month and before a long journey. Driving a car with the correct tyre pressure increases safety and saves fuel.

- The recommended tyre pressure levels for front and rear tyres are often different so refer to the vehicle handbook to get these right. Pressures could also be listed on the ledge inside the driver's door or inside the fuel cap.
- Don't forget to check the pressure of the spare tyre if there is one.
- Buy a pressure gauge so you can take accurate readings.

2. Regularly check the tread depth of your tyres and replace them when they are worn.

- Change your tyres before the tread depth is worn to the legal minimum of 1.6mm. The more tread you have on your tyres, the more water they can disperse.
- A simple way of checking the tread is to perform the '20p test'
- Take a 20p piece and place it between the main grooves of the tyre
- If the outer strip of the coin can be seen then it's likely your tyre doesn't have the legal minimum tread depth.
- Perform the test on at least three locations on each tyre.
- Drivers whose tyres fail to comply with the minimum tread depth risk a fine of up to £2,500 and three penalty points for each illegal tyre

3. Inspect the appearance and condition of your tyres on a regular basis for cracks, lumps, bumps, tears and bulges as this could show damage. If you spot any of these, make sure you get them checked by a qualified tyre expert so that it can be repaired or replaced where appropriate.

Notes to editor:

*Dangerous tyres responsible for more than 40pc of deaths where vehicle defect was the cause: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/reported-road-casualties-great-britain-annual-report-2013

Based on average mileage of 7900m, Department for Transport National Travel Survey 2013

Based on 32 million cars on the road

http://www.smmt.co.uk/2014/03/decades-fastest-growth-sees-almost-32-million-cars-road/

Average actual fuel efficiency 45mpg, Michelin estimate

Average fuel cost £1.18, AA Fuel Price report July 2015. UK average 117.2p unleaded, 119.3 diesel

1 litre of fuel produces 2.5kg of CO2, Comcar.co.uk. One litre diesel produces 2.6391, one litre unleaded produces 2.3035. Rounded to 2.5 for simplicity.

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Michelin, the leading tyre company, is dedicated to sustainably improving the mobility of goods and people by manufacturing, distributing and marketing tyres for every type of vehicle. It also offers innovative business support services, digital mobility services and publishes travel guides, hotel and restaurant guides, maps and road atlases. Headquartered in Clermont-Ferrand, France, Michelin is present in 170 countries, has 112,300 employees and operates 68 production plants in 17 countries. The Group also has a Technology Centre, responsible for research and development, with operations in Europe, North America and Asia. (www.michelin.com)

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