



Tyre tread depth and tyre safety checks

Read our guide to find out how to check your tyres correctly to ensure legal compliance as well as keep you safe on the road.

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Checking your legal tyre tread depth is one of the most important checks you can make on your car.

The lower your tread depth, the lower your tyre's grip on the road, which can increase braking distances and affect the handling and performance of your vehicle.

Driving with tyres that have a tread below the legal limit - or even worse, are bald - is dangerous. It can put you and other motorists at risk.

If you are involved in an accident and the car you are driving has illegal or bald tyres, you should be aware of the consequences.

Any insurance claim as a result of an accident could be invalidated, so potentially your insurer won't pay out any money any repairs needed to your vehicle.

However, driving with dangerous or defective tyres also puts drivers at risk of a fine of up to £2,500 and three points on their licence. That is per tyre, so four illegal tyres could mean a fine of £10,000 and 12 penalty points.

Under-inflation is one of the most common causes of tyre failure. Excessive sidewall flexing causes the tyres to run dangerously hot, especially at motorway speeds during hot weather. The build-up of heat can lead to tread separation or a sudden blowout. One in six motorway accidents involve tyre failure.

Tyre Safety Check Points:

1. All tyres are legal (with a minimum tread depth of 1.6mm) and are correctly inflated
2. There are no deep cuts or damage to the tyre walls
3. No cord is visible on the tyres
4. All wheel nuts are secure and tightened properly
5. The spare tyre or inflation kit is present
6. There is no irregular wear and tear to the tyres



How to check tyre tread depth – the 20p test

The 20p test is a simple, quick and easy way of checking the tyre tread of your car's wheels. Just take a 20p coin and insert it into the tread grooves on the tyre. If you can't see the outer band on the coin, your tyres are above the legal limit.

However, if you can see the band and that section of the coin is still visible, your tyres could be unsafe and require professional inspection by a mechanic. Drivers should conduct the 20p test every month to check tyre tread depth.