

## BEYOND THE DRIVING TEST

### The Situation

Automobile accidents are the No. 1 killer of teens in America, with 5,000 deaths occurring each year.<sup>1</sup> What's more, of the 2.2 million accidents per year among inexperienced drivers, 12 percent can be attributed to tire related issues, such as insufficient tread or pressure.<sup>2</sup> Even so, few driver's education programs offer instruction on tire maintenance and safety.

Because many of these accidents are preventable, Michelin and FIA have joined together to launch a new campaign, *Beyond the Driving Test*, to raise awareness of tire maintenance and safety. They surveyed 1,001 teen drivers and their parents, and 27 percent of teens report they never check the condition of their tires and less than half of teens (48 percent) check their tires at least monthly. The survey also showed that 55 percent of teens don't know the proper tire inflation level for their car, 44 percent don't know how to check tire tread, and 32 percent don't know how to check tire pressure.

### Driver's Education Curriculum Recommendation

To help students and young drivers understand why they should care about tire safety, states are encouraged to teach new drivers about tire safety by including such information in their driver's education curriculum, and asking a question(s) about the importance of checking tire pressure and tire tread depth on the vehicles they drive.

It's not enough for driver's education manuals to only make reference to tires. Instead, each state is encouraged to go beyond just mentioning tires in their curriculum by providing "how-to" information regarding how to check tire pressure and how to check tread depth and teaching new drivers this important, potentially life-saving information.

### Proposed Driver's Education Curriculum:

#### Recommended Tire Pressure and Tread Depth Information

##### How to Check Your Tire Pressure

Tires have been known to lose up to 1psi (pounds per square inch) every month, so check all tires, including your spare, once a month (or before a long trip). Here's how:

1. Purchase a trusted pressure gauge.
2. Open your car door and on the inside jamb there should be a sticker with your vehicle's recommended PSI (the measurement for tire pressure).
3. Check your tires "cold" – before you've driven or at least three hours after you've driven.
4. Insert pressure gauge into the valve stem on your tire. (The gauge will "pop" out and show a measured number. When you hear a "psst" sound, that's air escaping the tire. The escaping air shouldn't affect pressure substantially, unless you hold down the air pressure gauge too long.)
5. Compare the measured psi to the psi found on the sticker inside the driver's door of your vehicle or in owner's manual. DO NOT compare to the psi on your tire's sidewall.

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<sup>1</sup> NHTSA Youth Traffic Safety Statistics

<sup>2</sup> 2012 NHTSA study focused on tire problems as experienced by light vehicles in pre-crash phase



6. If your psi is above the number, let air out until it matches. If below, add air (or have a retailer help you) until it reaches the proper number.

### **How to Check Your Tread Depth**

Once every month, or before you embark upon a long road trip, check your tires for wear and damage problems. One easy way to check for wear is by using the penny test.

1. Take a penny and hold Abraham Lincoln's body between your thumb and forefinger.
2. Select a point on your tire where the tread appears the lowest and place Lincoln's head into one of the grooves.
3. If any part of Lincoln's head is covered by the tread, you're driving with the legal and safe amount of tread. If your tread gets below that (approximately 2/32 of an inch), your car's ability to grip the road in adverse conditions is greatly reduced.

### Suggestions for Driver's Education Tire Pressure Questions

Possible questions could describe or visually demonstrate:

- how to properly use a tire pressure gauge to check the tire pressure when the tire is cold (before the vehicle is driven or at least three hours after it has been driven),
- determine the proper PSI (pounds per square inch) number by referring to the inside of a vehicle door/door jam, and
- how to inflate and or let the air out of a tire to reach the correct PSI.

### Suggestions for Driver's Education Tread Depth Questions

Possible questions could describe or visually demonstrate how to apply the penny test to determine if tires are worn and need to be replaced.

For example, the penny test requires one to hold a penny with Abraham Lincoln's body between the thumb and forefinger and insert it into the lowest tire groove. If Lincoln's head can be seen, it indicates that the tires are worn and should be replaced soon; and that driving on them could be dangerous.

### Instructional Resource

States are welcome to use or cite the Michelin Glove Box Guide available at: <http://www.beyondthedrivingtest.com/> in their driver's education program course materials. The Glove Box Guide includes helpful how-to steps for checking tire pressure and tread depth.

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