

Getting a Grip on Winter Driving in Alberta

THE EVOLUTION OF THE TIRE

Tires have evolved over the years. Initially, there were summer tires and snow tires. Several decades ago, the all-season tire was introduced into the marketplace which provided motorists with better winter driving performance than a summer tire and the opportunity to avoid the cost and inconvenience of the semi-annual winter tire changeover. Some Alberta motorists still choose all-season tires since they meet personal needs based on driving habits, where they live and their comfort level with winter driving.

NOT ALL TIRES ARE CREATED EQUAL!

All tire rubber will stiffen as the weather gets colder, but the latest generations of winter tires maintain their elasticity even at extremely low temperatures approaching -30°C and below, providing superior traction and grip. Winter/snow tires are specially designed tires that are intended to work best in low temperatures and in snowy or icy conditions like the ones we have in Alberta. They are designed to provide your vehicles with better traction than regular or all-season tires. This is achieved with deep treads and siping that can grip better on snow or ice, meaning it will give drivers improved ability to start up a hill, stop or drive in deep snow.

All-weather tires are the closest thing possible to a Canadian “all-season” tire. They have more aggressive siping and softer compounds allowing them to be stamped with the Mountain/snowflake symbol but they do not wear as rapidly in the summer as a winter tire would.

THE LAW IN ALBERTA

Currently, the province of Alberta does not make it mandatory for vehicles to be equipped with winter tires during the winter months.

However, Alberta Transportation does recommend that driving in severe winter conditions that vehicles are equipped with four winter or all-weather tires for improved traction and control.

COMMON TIRE TYPES AND MARKINGS

Tire Type	Application	Marking
Winter	Designed for winter conditions	
All-Weather	Designed for all year use in Canada	
All-Season	Designed for year round usage in some Canadian markets. Rubber may start to harden and lose gripping power at temperatures below 7°C	M + S
Summer	Designed for summer use only (higher temperatures)	

INFORMATION

For more information about winter tires contact the Alberta Transportation - Vehicle Safety at vehicle.safety@gov.ab.ca or 780-427-8901, toll free in Alberta by first dialing 310-0000.

TIRE CHAINS AND STUDS

The province and municipalities do not have legislation specifically prohibiting the use of studded tire or tire chains, but have legislation making damage to the roadway an offence. A peace officer within a municipality could have a concern with deliberate damage to the roadway due to snow chains on a tire. A peace officer could charge under Alberta's *Highways Development and Protection Act* section 51, which prohibits damage to roadways. Several jurisdictions do have restrictions on using studded tires. Motorists using studded tires who are travelling to other jurisdictions should check before their trip.

