



OFFICE OF THE NATIONAL COMMANDER  
NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS  
CIVIL AIR PATROL  
UNITED STATES AIR FORCE AUXILIARY  
MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA 36112-5937

6 August 2020

MEMORANDUM FOR ALL REGION AND WING COMMANDERS

FROM: CAP/CC

SUBJECT: Vehicle Safety Alert – ACTION REQUIRED

1. Based on a possible risk of tire failure on CAP vehicles, I am directing that all vehicles undergo a tire inspection as outlined herein. This inspection must be conducted prior to 11 September 2020, or before the vehicle is used for a CAP mission or other activity, whichever occurs first. Vehicles with tires showing evidence of damage, dry rot, tread separation or those manufactured six or more years ago must be grounded until the tires have been replaced.
2. CAP units are having a huge impact in state and local community responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our vehicles are being used extensively to transport critical medical supplies, personal protective equipment and food. We respond to urgent requests at all hours and often under less than ideal weather conditions. I recently saw a photo of a tire that was removed following tread separation. The individuals driving that vehicle were fortunate that the damage was only minor. Tread separation and blowouts are among the leading causes of vehicle accidents and the primary cause of rollover accidents.
3. Most carmakers recommend replacing tires not later than six years from the manufacture date provided in the tire identification number. I asked CAP/LG to publish guidance on replacing tires based on age. An ICL to CAP Regulation 77-1, *Operation and Maintenance of CAP Vehicles*, directs that all tires, including the spare, be replaced not later than six years from date of manufacture. Confirming the manufacture date is imperative, therefore the ICL includes a reference to a graphic describing how to determine the age of the tire. Prior to 11 September, inspect all vehicle tires to determine the condition and date of manufacture. Any tire that is over six years old must be replaced prior to placing the vehicle back in service. As commanders, you are ultimately responsible for the condition of your vehicles. Please ensure these inspections are accomplished. Wing commanders will report to their region commanders when all their wing's vehicles have been inspected along with which vehicles have tires that need to be replaced.
4. Thank you for your efforts to safeguard our members and valuable resources.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark E. Smith".

MARK E. SMITH  
Major General, CAP  
National Commander

Attachment:  
Vehicle Safety Alert

cc:  
CAP/CV/XO/CCC/COO/AE/CP/DO/GC/GVR/IG/LG/MAC/SE  
CAP-USAF/CC/CV/DO/DT/JA/LG/SE  
All CAP Region and Wing CV/CS/AE/CP/DC/DO/DOC/DOH/DOS/DOV/HS/LG/SE

# Vehicle Safety Alert

## Vehicle Safety Alert

### **ACTION REQUIRED**

Based on a possible risk of tire failure on CAP vehicles, all vehicles will undergo a tire inspection as outlined below. This inspection must be conducted prior to 11 September 2020 or prior to the vehicle being used for a mission or other CAP activity, whichever occurs first.

Tires are an extremely important part of vehicle safety. As vehicle operators we must recognize that the time we spend inspecting tires is insignificant when compared with the inconvenience and consequences of a tire failure.

#### **Tire Safety Checklist**

1. Inspect tires for uneven wear patterns on the tread, cracks, foreign objects, dry rot or other signs of wear or trauma.
2. Check the tire age. Replace all tires, including the spare, if they were manufactured more than six years ago. (Use the graphic below to determine the age of the tire.)
3. Remove bits of glass and other foreign objects wedged in the tread.
4. Make sure your tire valves have valve caps.
5. Check tire pressure.
6. Do not overload your vehicle.
7. Check the tire information placard or owner's manual for the maximum recommended load for the vehicle.
8. If you are towing a trailer, remember that some of the weight of a loaded trailer is transferred to the towing vehicle.

#### **Tire Age**

Due to the serious nature of operating vehicles with old tires, CAP has adopted a policy of replacing tires based on condition, manufacturer tread wear guidelines or not later than six years from the date of manufacture marked on the tire.

Over the years many of us have relied on the penny test to determine the condition of a tire no matter the age of the tire. Old tires are dangerous no matter what the tread depth. Effects of tire aging are known to compromise drivability and handling characteristics. While there is no federally sanctioned safety guidance on when a tire is no longer safe, many carmakers recommend replacing all tires including the spare at the six-year point depending on environmental and operating conditions.

There may be some who feel they are not comfortable with their ability to evaluate the condition of their tires. For them the best option is to take their vehicle to a tire shop. A tire professional will evaluate your tires and make replacement recommendations.

Use the example below to determine the date of manufacture for a tire.

